

FATHOMS

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Reg. No. VBH 2101

EST. 1954



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VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

-- DEC 1988

VSAG

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FATHOMS



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VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

COVER STORY: VSAG diver Alex Talay along with proprietor of Melbourne Dive Services, Dick Whittaker, seen diving the famous Lady on the Wreck of the President Coolidge. This photo was taken by Keith Jensen whilst visiting the Island of Espirito Santo, Vanuatu 1983.

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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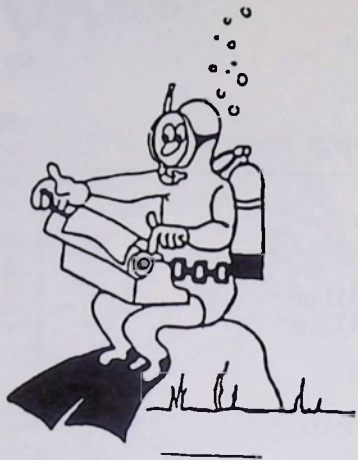
Next general meetings

Thursday 15th December 8.00 p.m.
Thursday 16th February 8.00 p.m.
North Melbourne Football Club,
Fogarty Street, North Melbourne

Next committee meetings

24th January - M. Jeacle's home.
21st February - P. Reynold's home.

Editorial submissions to: "The Editor" Fathoms C/- 13 BIRDWOOD STREET,
BOX HILL SOUTH, VIC., 3128
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EDITORIAL

As we reach the end of another year, it is timely to reflect on the past 12 months.

1988 has certainly been a lucrative one for the Club in financial terms. Club funds were boosted by over \$3,600 through a scheme introduced and promoted by then President Mick Jeacle in which V.S.A.G. would be paid a commission on wine orders passed to a wine company. I am sure that the result surpassed everyone's expectation, and has certainly given the Club substantial reserves to meet expenses and opportunities ahead.

We have had 2 successful overseas trips, one to the Mikhail Lermontov in New Zealand and the other to the Solomons. These were both great trips and plans are well underway to repeat both of them next year.

Local diving has seen better years, but again the activities of the Club were generally well supported and Members were able to enjoy a wide variety of diving.

Once again there was controversy over certain incidents which has caused a reaction amongst some circles that will threaten our ability to continue to enjoy what is presently a reasonably restrictive-free past time.

1989 will see the Club celebrate its 35th year. As such it puts V.S.A.G. as one of the oldest active dive Club in Australia.

From the Club's very earliest beginnings in 1954 when a big days diving was at Mount Martha in wetsuits that were home-made the Club has certainly changed a great deal in terms of the type of diving we do and the equipment we use. No doubt today's diving is more convenient, however I wonder if it is more enjoyable.

Whilst we might regard the frontiers of diving in the 1950's to be rather tame, it was pretty much virgin territory. Today so often divers return to well worn locations. Now whilst this is fine, and let me say that there are many spots that I will always grab an opportunity to go back to, there is also a big ocean out there and perhaps we're denying ourselves some great opportunities by not engaging in more exploratory diving and fact finding. If this sounds like a criticism of the dive site selectors, it's not meant to be, for like the others I'm at a loss to think of new places. So perhaps the idea would be to exchange information with other clubs and dive operators. There is a possibility that access to diving in the Port Phillip Heads area will be restricted - and if this occurs we are going to need new territory!

Congratulations to Margaret and Tony Tipping on the birth of their third child Emma. Tip is delighted with another baby in the house, but has told his mates . . . "If Marg gets pregnant again, she's really in trouble". - and it's not just because he's run out of space to extend the house!

May I take this opportunity to thank all Members who have contributed articles to Fathoms during the year. I will certainly need many more next year.

To those heading off to Streaky Bay, have a great trip. To those staying at home, I hope the weather is kind.

To all our readers have a very happy Christmas and New Year.

Editor

COMMITTEE NEWS

The following items are a summary of the major issues raised at the October and November Committee Meetings.

Orders for wine are still being taken by Mick Jeacle at \$98.00/dozen. This scheme, besides providing Members with a very good wine is also raising \$12.00/dozen for the Club.

Paul Tipping is holding old V.S.A.G. Member medical records. These records were superseded by the CZ-18 Diving Medical Examination, and should Members wish to retrieve their old forms, they should speak to Paul.

Club cash reserves as at the 21st November, 1988 were \$7,904.71.

The Committee will arrange for stocks of Club; t-shirts, hats and windcheaters to be available for sale at future meetings.

The Committee express a vote of thanks to June Scott for arranging games for the children at the Tennis Party.

Graham Suckling's application for membership was approved pending proof of diving medical and qualification. A final check-out dive with the Club would also be required.*

TANK TESTING

Members requiring their scuba tanks to be tested are asked to contact the Property Officer, Pat Reynolds - Telephone: 789 1092.

S.D.F.-V. NEWS

by John Goulding

Don Abell, Des Williams and John Goulding attended the S.D.F.-V. Meeting on the 4th October.

Major discussion of the evening centred around the Draft Conditions of Approval for Diving in the Port Phillip Entrance area.

After lengthy discussion of the issues it was decided that S.D.F.-V. should prepare a formal response.

This matter was subsequently acted upon by S.D.F.-V. President Mike Vize and John Goulding.

A diver insurance plan is in operation which provides a range of financial benefits according to the nature of an injury. The premium for this policy is \$7.00/head. However a condition of the policy requires a "reasonable" number of divers in a Club to sign up.*

EASTER 1989 - TIDAL RIVER

Easter next year falls in March and could very well be another boomer.

The Club will try and secure 15 camp sites at Tidal River - Wilsons Prom.

DEPOSITS OF \$20.00 ARE REQUIRED TO DON ABELL
BY THE DECEMBER GENERAL MEETING.

"GEORGE KERMODE" - SUNKEN BUCKET DREDGE

by Des Williams

One of our popular dive sites is the scuttled harbour dredger "George Kermode" lying in 21 metres of water off Smiths' Beach at Phillip Island.

This vessel has had a chequered career worthy of mention at this point.

Originally built in Scotland in 1914 she was named the "Sir William Mathews" and purchased by the Indian Government where it was set to work to deepen the port of Colombo in Ceylon (Sri-Lanka). Next she was sold to the Australian Government and sent to Albany in West Australia to dredge the entrance channel and swinging basin.

In 1925, the W.A. Government bought her and sent her to Melbourne for the first of many refitts, after which she sailed to Bunbury and then in 1926 to Geraldton.

The vessel was then purchased by the Melbourne Harbour Trust, renamed the "George Kermode" after the Chairman of M.H.T., and brought to Melbourne in 1941 where, because of her good stability she was used to dredge mainly in Port Phillip Bay. In 1973, whilst dredging in Webb Dock, she developed cracks in the boiler and had to be laid up. One by one the pieces of the dredge were removed and given away; the teakwood panels being reused in the "Polly Woodside".

Finally on Wednesday 31st March, 1976 the vessel was scuttled in 21 metres of water off Smiths' Beach, Phillip Island, settling on her starboard side. She is now a home of many species of fish, the numbers of which grow each year, as the marine growth slowly covers the metal hull.

The "George Kermode" is 235 ft. long and has a beam of 44 ft. and equently takes a considerable time to explore fully. There are many "swim-throughs" on the dredge and an exciting dive is guaranteed. Entry inside the hull is possible and very interesting, but extreme caution is required as openings are very small and bad silting can occur.

NAVIGATING THE RIP

No-one should venture out of Port Phillip Heads without a thorough understanding of The Rip.

The Rip has a well deserved reputation as a hazard to shipping of all kinds, as turbulent water surges through the Heads.

This ocean access to Port Phillip is less than 3km wide and Rip Bank, a 2 1/2 km rocky flat in 11 to 15 metres of water, restricts the flow of water even further.

The tides moving in and out of the Heads have scoured out channels of varying depths, and the sheer force of the tidal stream is sufficient to prevent even large ships from making headway.

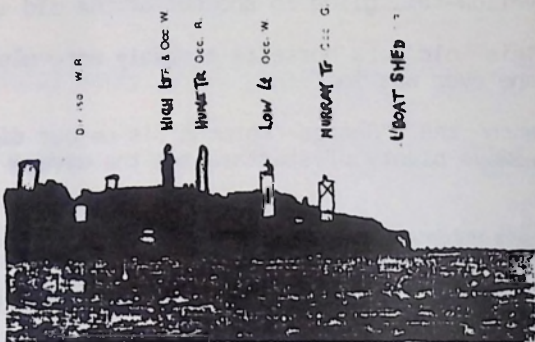
The uneven depths, together with the ebb tide running up to seven knots, causes this "race" or "rip", which during and after southwest winds, still breaks furiously and dangerously for smaller craft, despite extensive blasting designed to deepen the channel on Rip Bank and to give a more even tidal flow.

Obviously the most suitable times for smaller craft to navigate the Rip is during the brief periods of slack water at the turn of the tides. These can reasonably be expected to be at the time of high and low water, but this is not so with the times of high and low water at Port Phillip Heads.

There is a 2.4m tidal range in Bass Strait, but while the tide is rising in the strait, the 2.8km-wide entrance only permits sufficient water to enter Port Phillip to raise the level inside the bay by about 1m. Thus at high water at Port Phillip Heads, the sea level inside the bay is more than 1m lower, and the flood stream continues for a further three hours until the level inside and outside equalise.

By that time the tide in Bass Strait has been falling for three hours, and continues to fall for another three hours at a greater rate than it does inside the bay, thus creating an ebb stream for that time after low water at Port Phillip Heads. This results in the times of slack water in the Rip coinciding with the times of high and low water inside the bay (the predicted times of high and low water at Williamstown).

Southwesterly gales in Bass Strait



Appearance of High Light, Home Tower, Low Light and Mary Tower when sailing on the boat in the West course.

bank the sea up at its northern extremity and thus increase the rate and duration of the flood streams to create a head of water within the bay, which in turn increases the rate and duration of ebb streams after the gales abate.

Inquiries into the cause of sailing ships being wrecked near Port Phillip Heads revealed that unwary shipmasters were encouraged by fast winds to enter against the ebb tides. These, following the course of Entrance Deep, swept the hapless



Aerial Photograph of Port Phillip Heads showing Queen Hill, Point Lonsdale and Point Nepean.

CORAL QUEEN

by Graeme Suckling

My recent trip to Madang introduced me to tropical diving for the first time, so understandably most dives were fantastic. The freedom of diving in a lycra suit, the unbelievable visibility, the incredible colour and variety of underwater life and of course the cosy warmth, all meant every dive was highly pleasurable. But one of my dives stood out as a unique experience.

Early in my stay at 'Jais Aben' resort I was told of a very unusual night dive which did not require a torch. Though deep diving in tropical seas on dark nights with one's torch turned off may not be everyone's cup of tea, I was intrigued. However, it seemed unlikely that I could participate in this dive as a minimum of five paying divers was needed to make the charter economically viable, and there were very few divers staying at the resort.

As luck would have it, once the word got around Madang a group was soon formed. It included the current divemaster from 'Jais Aben' ('J.J.'), a former divemaster (Geoff), a Kiwi (George), an Adelaide couple (Jan and Alex) and yours truly. So we had a quorum and the dive was scheduled for my last night at the resort. The only thing that could stop us now was the weather, but that final Tuesday evening proved to be perfect for diving; barely a breeze, a smooth, very clear sea and of course the ever-present tropical warmth.

We left the resort in an open boat and within 15 minutes had located the buoy attached to the 'Coral Queen'. It is funny how every group seems to have some optimists and some more careful people; the optimists were all for tying the boat to the buoy line, which looked pretty frayed to me. But the careful types (who incidentally were a clear majority), won the day, so the anchor was dropped to ensure that six divers would not surface to a dark, empty sea should the buoy line break!

As we waited I surveyed the scene of numerous tropical islands fringed with waving coconut palms and vast sky filled with beautiful cloud formations. A far cry indeed from my last night dive in Port Phillip Bay during winter! Geoff interrupted my thoughts of that cold, cold dive to brief us on what to expect. The 'Coral Queen' lay in 35 metres of water so our bottom time would be limited. We divided into three pairs - Geoff and George, Alex and Jan, and my buddy was to be 'J.J.'. Timing was everything on this dive, for the objective was not to explore the wreck, but to see some fish! Yes in the dark! But these fish were very unusual, because they had their own sources of light.

The production and utilization of light by animals, particularly by fishes, has interested scientists and naturelists for centuries. Perhaps the most spectacular example of this phenomenon, called bioluminescence, is found among the "flashlight" fishes of the family Anomalopidae. (This name is derived from the Greek for "abnormal eye").

As far as is known there are only four species of flashlight fish in the world's waters, and only two of these have been observed alive by biologists. In all these species the fishes have a specialized organ below each eye that is filled with light-emitting bacteria, which collectively generate an illumination that is about as intense as the light from a weak flashlight. The species we were hoping to see was probably Anomalops katoptron, which can turn its light off by rotating the light organ downward into a darkened pocket. A. katoptron has been found in waters off Indonesia, the Solomon Islands and Japan, and is about 10 cm. long.

Whereas most bioluminescent animals normally use their light for only one purpose - be it communication, luring prey, avoiding predators or improving visibility - flashlight fishes employ their light for all these purposes.

A. katoptron are reclusive creatures, living by day in dark caves (or shipwrecks) in fairly deep water (below 30 metres) and becoming active at night when they leave their shelters to form schools of up to 200 individuals. They then forage in shallower water on coral reefs for plankton. Because individual fish turn off their lights several times a second by "blinking", a school shows us many flashing lights. Hence there is on need for torches to locate these fish in the dark.

During the briefing my excitement rose as Geoff told us of some past experiences on the wreck, with divers from all over the world. We were told this would be an experience never to be forgotten - a unique "buzz" even for the seasonal diver. But there was always the chance our timing would be off and the fish would already be gone. There wasn't really much time to play with at that depth either.

We hit the water at about 6.45 p.m. and were soon finning for the bottom of the buoy line. It wasn't quite dark and I had no difficulty seeing the inquisitive expression on "J.J.'s" face as she signaled to see if I was O.K. Even on the deck of the 'Coral Queen' I could see "J.J.'s" face quite clearly, but now it was lit up by scores of flashlight fish. We had hit the jackpot! We descended into the hold and I knelt in rapt silence as about 200 living flashing lights circled me incessantly. I had been totally involved in this scene for several minutes when "J.J." tapped me on the shoulder to signal we should ascend to the deck. Her timing was perfect, for as we knelt on the deck the fish made a final series of circuits of the hold, then spilled out into the open sea and slowly disappeared into the darkness, marking their paths like fluorescent tracers as they went.

Time for torches now and we disturbed some sleeping varieties of diurnal fish, who by comparison with their nocturnal cousins were decidedly dowdy, as we finned across the deck and located the anchor I couldn't wait to get to the surface to talk about the experience, but had to be patient, ascending slowly using the depth gauge and timer, and pausing for decompression at 6 metres and 3 metres.

'J.J.' and I were first into the boat but had little time for conversation before the others appeared. Six very excited divers, all high on a unique shared adventure, then enjoyed an uneventful trip (but who cared!) back to the resort in the warmth of a tropical night, before joining a group of non-divers for dinner. Have you ever noticed how non-divers seem to have difficulty comprehending the buzz that a diver can feel after one of those special diving experiences? These people could only talk of sharks and other dangers, though I think deep down they were green with envy.

Many interesting questions about the Anomalopid fishes remain to be explored by scientists. Possibly some of these questions may even be answered by future research on the inhabitants of the 'Coral Queen'. I am certainly glad I have seen these intriguing little fish in large numbers and I will remember the 'Coral Queen' and her cargo of flashlight fish for many years to come.*

MIKHAIL LERMONTOV TRIP 1989

V.S.A.G. will return to the wreck of the Mikhail Lermontov in New Zealand around May next year.

Total cost including airfares should be under \$1,500.

Already the trip is 70% booked with:-

Don Abell
Des Williams
Alex Talay
Bob Scott
Max Synon
Ross Luxford
Dave Moore

There are only 3 spaces left.

CONTACT DON ABELL ON 29 4415.

TRUK LAGOON TRIP

by Des Williams

Thought you might be interested in the latest lowdown on our proposed return trip to Truk Lagoon around April 1990.

We have had notice from Jan Dyer of Aquarius Dive Travel that Continental Airlines plan to commence direct flights from Sydney and Brisbane to Guam in March/April 1989. This will open up Truk Lagoon to Australian diver's and mean a substantial reduction in costs.

At present, Australian divers are reaching Truk via flights through Honolulu at a cost of \$2,648.00 for a 10 day trip. This will give you a guide only as we do not know costs for 1990 yet.

It is my plan to spend more than the usual seven nights in Truk, seeing as we are going all that way. We may even move across to Palau to round off the trip - but all of this is yet to be finalised by majority vote of those planning to go.

V.S.A.G. response to visiting Truk has been very good, with the following people showing interest:

D. Williams	T. Brooks	P. Tipping
G. Williams	J. Large (??)	R. Luxford
F. Bruce	A. Mastrowicz	T. Rossi (??)
K. Leslie	R. Scott	M. Jackiw
G. Suckling	J. Goulding	A. Talay
A. Finnegan	D. Abell	N. Medhurst
P. Reynolds	P. Sier	

We plan to have Peter Stone attend one of our meetings early in 1989 to give us the latest information on Truk Lagoon and answer any questions - we will then be looking for firm commitments by those planning to go.

Diving conducted from open boats, so ladies must be prepared to "rough it".

MEDIA WATCH

THE MAHOGONY SHIP

Members of the 8/12 Medium Regiment RAA from Holsworthy, NSW, on the march for a lost ship and an artist's impression of a Portuguese caravel — Picture: BILL McAULEY

By DEBORAH STONE

AN Australian Army operation to dig up the country's past may prove this year's Bicentenary does not mark 200 years since Europeans set foot on the great southern coast. Buried in the sands of time on the western Victorian coast may lie a shipwreck that is the only evidence of a previous landing.

Since 1836, when whalers and settlers reported seeing parts of an ancient sailing ship on a desolate beach, Australians have periodically searched for fragments of the wreck. Now the army has detailed a group of soldiers to the sands and is pouring its resources, surveyors and even an armoured vehicle into the search.

"We're going to spend a week digging and if we don't find it we hope to send another unit back next year and the year after and so on until we've either found it or exhausted the possibility that it could be in this area," said

unit historian Lieutenant Tim Slattery.

And after only a day's search the army unit believes it has stumbled on a key clue to the location of the ship — called the Mahogany Ship by the army — the remains of a reportedly dark wood found.

Lieutenant Slattery said they found a cattle fence, dating back to the mid-1800s which historical reports say is near an older cattle fence — the closest item discovered to the believed vicinity of the ship.

The group will upgrade its work in the area.

If the excavations find the remains they will follow it in search of a boat, providing a focal point for the search. Aboriginal oral history and journals of English settlers bear witness to the hidden legacy of adventure.

If it exists it could be 450 years old, probably a Portuguese caravel and almost certainly marking the spot where the real flag of settlement should have been planted.

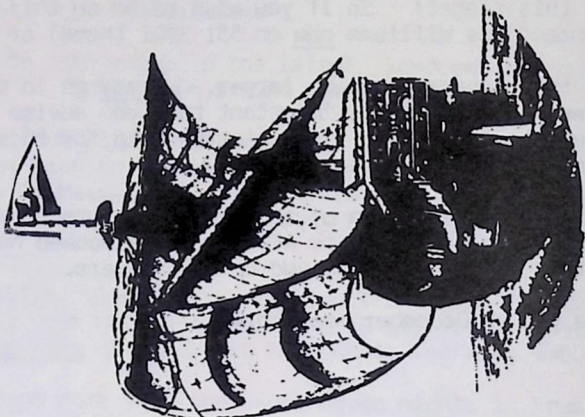
While the army's main interest is in adventure training for the soldiers and good public relations in the hope of recruitment, Lt Slattery said they hoped they would be able to find something of worth to the command, particularly because the search was starting in Bicentennial year.

In the last 14 years three similar searches have been attempted.

Some have speculated that it could have been a lost Dutch ship headed for Indonesia, a derelict Arab dhow, or even a 13th century Chinese junk sent to capture Sri Lanka.

Three ships set sail from Portugal in 1522 under the command of Captain Cristóvão de Mendonçá aiming to stop Ferdinand Magellan going close to Portuguese colonies.

Only two ever returned, but old Portuguese maps detailing part of the southern Australian coast suggest they made it Down Under.



REFUGE COVE WEEKEND

The good ship Mirrabooka is once again being prepared for the Australia Day Weekend trip to Refuge Cove.

We will leave Port Franklin Wharf at 6.30 a.m. on Saturday 28th January and return on the evening of Monday 30th January

Note: Monday 30th is the gazetted Australia Day Holiday in Victoria.

A deposit of \$50.00 is payable to John Goulding and this is required by the December General Meeting on 15th December.

Those who have indicated their attendance are:

J. Goulding	D. Catherall
D. Abell	M. Jackiw
N. Medhurst	A. Finnegan
P. Jones	C. Llewellyn
T. Brooks	M. Taliano
J. Namiota	G. Williams
P. Tipping	

Note: At this stage the trip is overbooked. So only the first 12 people with their deposits in will be able to attend.

This year the menu will be changed (for the better!) and there will be a few other surprises as well!

SO DON'T MISS OUT! CONTACT JOHN GOULDING NOW: 890 6634 (Home)
666 3543 (Work)*

SOLOMON ISLANDS

by Mick Jeacle

DAY 6

An inspection of the video battery indicated that it may not have charged properly, so what was to be an early dive did not kick off until 10.30. However, as we were keen to record all dives nobody seemed to mind sitting around for a few hours, particularly as we planned to film a re-enactment of the finding of the bell.

This wreck, which we later identified from the bell as the Kiku Maru, lies in about 150 feet of water sitting bolt upright. Descending down the anchor line it wasn't long before we encountered her great mast which reaches to about 50 feet from the surface, complete with light near the top. The wreck is in very good condition and the bridge area was already recognizable. We all congregated around this area whilst Brian and Alex went inside so that we could record the bell sequence. Following this we all went off in different directions to explore an excellent wreck not previously dived by sports divers.

An inspection of the holds revealed heaps of shell casings and machine gun bullets. There were also quite a few bronze lanterns, complete with glass, which were probably kept for spares. It wasn't hard to imagine how one of these would look all polished up. Oh, the torture of it all!

Somehow, Bazza can't have been present at the start of the dive when we were filming the bell segment. After the dive and whilst we were all hanging onto the deco line, I tried to show him my wire medicine bottle complete with stopper, when he made a gesture that seemed to indicate that it was trash compared to what he had in his bag. A close inspection revealed the bell, and I immediately thought there must have been two bells, so surely he wouldn't bring up the one from the bridge. This theory was soon put to rest when I recognized several other items which Brian had placed alongside the bell which he planned to retrieve at the end of the dive. The look on Bazza's face when we told him the sad news upon surfacing was one of total dismay and he

was last heard mumbling something like "dickhead" shortly after Brian thanked him for carting his goodies to the surface for him. As we motored back to Wyuna everyone chatted excitedly about the wreck and all expressed a keenness to dive her again the next day.

Around 5.00 p.m. that day we then went out to dive another Japanese freighter. Depth averaged about 130 feet and visibility was fairly good although the light was beginning to fade. On the way down the anchor line about 8 sharks circled above us and upon reaching the wreck a big school of Barracouta, which were all of 4 feet in length circled us. These fish remained with us on the whole dive and hopefully will show up on the film. The wreck itself was again upright, but because of the depth we could not inspect many parts of her due to the previous deep dive. An excellent dive highlighted by the fish life present.

DAY 7

Following a light breakfast we went off to dive the remaining known wreck in Wickham Harbour, lying in about 140 feet of water. The visibility was excellent and probably in the vicinity of around 80 feet. There were no sharks or pelagics but many large fish were sighted in and around the wreck. Again we found plenty of places to enter the wreck. There were many boxes of 50 mm. shells in the focsle and a few large shell cases were littered around the decks. The main hold contained 2 large field guns lying on their sides and a fire extinguisher was found in the engine room. Another great wreck dive. What a place Wickham Harbour is! A beautiful setting, along with 4 wrecks and the possibility of finding another 2 which were sunk there, one of which is a destroyer. Our group was the first sport diving group to dive 4 wrecks there.

On returning to Wyuna, Brian mentioned that chief Stanley had offered to show him another wreck that afternoon, and he suggested to Alex that they would go out with Stanley to check it out for the rest of us. Well the commotion that followed left Brian in no doubt as to our somewhat mutinous intentions if he did not take us all on the exploratory dive. I guess Bazza was the most boisterous in voicing his opinion to this end, closely followed by yours truly.

Pat and young Brian fetched chief Stanley at 3.30 p.m. and brought him back to Wyuna. Brian then went off with Stanley on his own to look for the wreck, minus his dive gear. However, after some searching they failed in their efforts to locate it and when Brian returned we decided to dive the Kagana Maru again, mainly to retrieve my torch.

This is a good dive, but it has been well picked over for crockery etc. However, if it weren't for the thick layer of silt and sea shells on her there would most likely be a lot of souvenirs to be found.

DAY 8

We arose at 6.45 a.m. to get in an early dive on the Kiku Maru, before leaving Wickham Harbour. Bazza wanted to get a brass light out of the forward section, so I followed him to that section where he quickly found what he was after. We then returned to the bridge area where we could see Brian underneath in the engine room. Brian motioned for us to come inside but the narrow entrance was not exactly made for yours truly, but following some pulling and tugging by Brian I did manage to get in. Here I discovered that Brian was excitedly ogling the ship's telegraph which appeared in good condition. A quick survey of the area revealed other gauges and fittings, and even a red painted fire extinguisher still hanging on the wall. Brian later revealed that he entered a room that had full racks of crockery but the bludger (term of endearment, Brian) did not bring any up for us. Obviously he knew this was to be our last dive in the area and we could not do anything about it, but it is sure to be remembered by those lucky enough to return next year, eh Alex. This wreck is a superb dive, and you could easily spend a week diving it twice a day.

Following another excellent breakfast by Marie-Clare we weighed anchor and set out for Munray (Mearuku) Island, some 7 hours away.

We arrive at Munray Island at 4.15 p.m., following a fairly rough trip across. During the journey we at last caught a small tuna and a small couta on Alex's wonder lines. Another highlight was the sighting of a number of whales blowing off, but it was not possible to get closer than about 400 yards to these goliaths of

the sea. During this stretch Igor was a pale shade of grey and Bazza was not game to go below to have a snooze.

Upon arrival we quickly geared up and had a dive on the reef. Visibility was around 130 feet and the fish life excellent. Sighted about 4 sharks, dogtooth tuna, schools of travally and countless colourful fish. On the way back to the boat we stopped and Bazza and I dived a series of underwater caves to look for painted crayfish on Brian's suggestion. Visibility in the caves resembled Mt. Gambier. We did not find any crays but it did not matter and we swam back to Wyuna where we joined the others for a further 15 minutes or so. This was one of the best reef dives one could wish to do due to the visibility, the underwater terrain, and the extensive fish life. That evening we enjoyed an excellent fish dinner.

DAY 9

Up anchor at 6.05 a.m. bound for the Russell Islands. I saw no reason to get up that early as Alex, Finn and I had made another fair dent in the blue cans the night before. Whilst I lay there reading my book, I could hear someone state that the boys had caught a dogtooth tuna. Not long afterwards Alex came below to inform us that they got a marlin on the line after the fish had followed the line right up to within 20 feet of the boat while the boys reeled in the line to check it. Alex said it was a great sight to behold but of course it got off and we lost about 200 yards of our line, for which we had no replacement. It would not have been more than 15 minutes when he returned to report another marlin hook-up, but this time we lost what remained of the line. The fish leapt from the water a number of times as it tried to dislodge the hook, providing all observers a spectacular sight indeed.

After about 3 hours, we arrived at Mbanika Island. Brian suggested we dive a spot called Shark Point and after anchoring Wyuna in a passage between two islands, we took off in the dinghy to the dive site. On the way there, some discussion took place and we questioned Brian as to why the site is known as Shark Point. He informed us that the local abattoirs dumps all its bones, offal, cattle heads etc. at this spot about 3 times per week, and that if we were lucky they may well have done so today.

I couldn't help but notice the look on Finn's face as he stared at Brian in utter disbelief as he muttered "the guy's insane!" When we arrived we soon saw it was our lucky day as we ogled the pile of guts and bones sitting on the rocks about one foot above the water line. By this time Finn was muttering nervously that there was no way he was going to jump in there, but his nervous tones soon turned to laughter when he announced that he could not dive anyway as his weightbelt buckle was broken. Well, you never saw 6 pairs of hands move so quickly to ensure Finn was going to perish with the rest of us, and in a short time the buckle was fixed. "Ya bastards", he exclaimed, "it took me half an hour to break it!" Although I have singled Finn out here, mainly for the addition of a bit of comedy, I think its accurate to say that we were all fairly shitting ourselves as we took a deep breath and rolled off the boat.

As we descended the first thing we noticed was the bones. Thousands of bones littered the sea bed and one could only presume they were all cattle bones. The area was noticeably devoid of fish life and before we knew it we were at a depth of 90 feet, but no dark shadows were to be sighted. At this point we decided to return to the top of the wall which leveled out in about 15 feet of water, and there they were! Blacktips, grey whalers and even a seven foot tiger shark. They were not at all pleased by our presence as they darted about all over the place. A most exhilarating experience.

As we made our way back towards the dinghy we came across a canyon in the rocks which housed quite a few nurse sharks. Brian proceeded to monster them and even tried to ride one which was quite a funny sight. The video should show some good footage provided the film lasted long enough, as we noted upon return to the boat that the tape was finished. Back on board the dinghy, the air was alive with excitement. Who would believe that we dived where cattle guts was dumped possibly only hours prior to our entering the water? Brian admitted that he pondered the thought of diving this spot for 4 years before plucking up the courage to do so. Now of course he takes great sadistic delight in taking divers there to observe their reaction. I'm glad he took us.

V.S.A.G. SAFETY PROCEDURES

The Committee of the V.S.A.G. has determined the following safety procedures which are to be adhered to by all Members on Club dives.

1. The Dive Captain is to take all responsibility for arrangements and safety for the days diving activities. The Club Safety Officer is to act only in the role of an observer and advisor to the Dive Captain.
2. For each Club dive the plan is to be announced and adhered to unless alteration is cleared by the Dive Captain.
3. When diving as a group of boats under anchor one or more boats should be manned to aid any calls of distress from divers and ensure the safety of the other boats.
4. The Club advocates that divers use the "buddy" system whenever possible.
5. When diving in and around the Rip, shipping movements should be checked out. No divers to submerge if any ship is within sight.
6. When problems arise on the surface and divers are on a buoy line they should be pulled up by the surface craft. The person holding on the buoy is to control the diving of his buddies and they should therefore surface on his instruction.
7. At least one boat diving each day should carry a club oxygen cylinder with adapter.
8. New Members should always be paired with experienced divers in the Club. This procedure should be carried out for a considerable period after membership to ensure that the Club is satisfied with their capabilities and that they are given every confidence in their own ability and the ability of other Members.
9. The Boat Captain is to take responsibility in his boat to brief the divers on procedures to be adopted for the days diving.*

THE 1988 "DOWNLOW MEDAL" PROGRESS UPDATE

by John Lawler

The latest V.S.A.G. Club dive was held on the 13th November and so far this year our Club has recorded 48 programmed dives in 1988.

Unfortunately some fairly bad weather has led to the cancellation of many dives and the Warrnambool four day holiday was a complete blow out.

The two major overseas junkets to New Zealand and the Solomon Islands pushed a number of divers well up the chart and the race is now dominated by Mick Jeacle and Alex Talay.

Igor Chernichov is only 9 points behind the leader!

The recorded dives for all participants are:

M. Jeacle	59	C. Llewellyn	9
A. Talay	58	W. Cannan	8
I. Chernichov	50	J. Goulding	8
B. Truscott	46	B. Hayes	8
D. Reynolds	45	B. O'Kane	8
J. Lawler	37	M. Talliana	6
A. Finnegan	36	M. Synon	6
D. Catherall	29	P. Sier	4
C. Brincat	27	D. Moore	3
J. Namiota	26	S. Medhurst	3
D. Abell	26	R. Swaffa	3
F. Bruce	24	M. Jackiw	3
B. Scott	24	R. Olorenshaw	3
R. Luxford	23	P. Tipping	3
T. Tipping	17	T. Johns	2
D. Williams	15	P. Griffiths	2
A. Tutton	14	G. Williams	2
A. Mastrowicz	13	D. Whitehill	2
P. Jones	12	J. Turner	1
R. Lawson	11	P. King	1
J. Large	11		

"DOWNLOW" PRESENTATION DINNER & V.S.A.G. SOCIAL EVENING

The presentation of the 1988 "Downlow Awards" will be held again at:-

STAVROS GREEK TAVERN,
183 VICTORIA AVENUE,
ALBERT PARK.

The date is not firm yet but will be late February or early March 1989.

The Stavros Tavern was the venue for the '87 Downlow Awards and it is a really fun place.

So in the final run to December 31st and with Streaky Bay on the agenda and additional local Club dives planned for those divers staying around Melbourne over the Christmas break, it's neck and neck between Mick Jeacle and Alex Talay - who will win?

Happy diving,

John Lawler *



FLOTSAM & JETSAM

The Melbourne diving scene was pretty grim over the August, September and October months.

On just about every dive scheduled by V.S.A.G. bad weather made the dive a not too exciting occasion and in some instances, caused the dive to be cancelled.

After driving 4 hours to Warrnambool for what has now become the "Melbourne Cup Weekend" we were greeted with a south westerly gale of immense force which whipped the sea into a frenzy.

Perhaps we were content to have a lay day on the first day, but when the wind kept up for another 2 days it was disappointing to say the least.

Just 2 months earlier other divers had swum with whales off the Warrnambool coast, but for us the only swimming we did was in the heated pool of the caravan park. Had the facilities of the park been inferior, this would have been a disastrous weekend, however I have a suspicion that a few of the lads and lasses enjoyed the rest and the comfort of their cabins.

We were also fortunate in not having to depend on Igor or Neil Medhurst to provide our food, as their hours of fishing proved as disappointing as the horse I backed in the Cup.

Lawler's dinner parties were again a great hit - particularly the one where he had a waiter on tap.

So the diving gear stayed dry until November 13th, when the mysterious "clean-up" dive was held. On this occasion Barry Truscott cleaned up everyone else by raising single handed without the aid of explosives, crowbars, lifting bags or subversion, a complete bronze rudder shaft assembly from a mysterious now protected Victorian wreck. Whilst little is known

of the wreck, from the size of the shaft, it must have been all of 20 feet long, and went down outside the Heads sometime in the last 100 years!

Bazza's prize of \$50.00 was almost as eagerly sought as Ross Luxford's second prize of 2 dozen cans of beer for cleaning up a heap of broken "bits and pieces".

No doubt the priceless relics found by Barry, Ross and others on this dive will hold pride of place amongst our Members trophies for years to come.

Whilst all this may sound like a fabulous day's diving, it was by our standards just fair. Once again the weather was a bit off. A howling northerly made the going really rough and as a passenger in Mick Jeacle's boat, I now know why they call it "The Brick". In fact I called it a few names of my own that date as we banged and bashed our way through the 1 metre slop to and from the dive site.

Sunday 20th November, saw us at the V.S.A.G. Tennis Party. The Cranbourne South tennis courts provided an ideal spot with 4 courts available and good Bar-B-Que facilities complete with shelter. Which was duly required, because being a weekend it poured rain.

The V.S.A.G. mile was held and Graham Suckling won in fine form. In his after race press conference Suckling tried to give an impression that he was somewhat surprised with his win . . .

In between swigs on a stubby he exclaimed . . . "I really didn't think I would win it, I haven't run a mile since I left school".

Race organizers and official handicapper Paul Tipping who is reported to have lost a fortune on the race was heard to mutter . . . HMMPF - maybe he hasn't run a mile but by the look of him, the bastard's run just about every other distance!

For anyone who has an interest in the famous Loch Ard wreck you would certainly know of the porcelain peacock. This magnificent peacock standing 153 cms. tall was washed ashore in a wooden crate after the sinking of the Loch Ard in 1878. It is now on display at the Warrnambool Flagstaff Hill Museum. It was one of 4 peacocks that were known as the Minto Majolica Peacocks which

were hand crafted in Europe and was on its way to the World Trade Exhibition in Melbourne in that year.

Well it seems another one has turned up! On the 8th November, Solheby's Auctions were offering for sale another of these famous peacocks. Expected price - between \$50,000 and \$60,000.

For the last Fathoms for the year, Flotsam and Jetsam would like to wish its readers (if any) a very happy Christmas and a safe and excellent New Year.

Signed Phil Harmonic*

FOR THE DIVER WHO HAS EVERYTHING

by Des Williams

Yes, your own submarine to explore the deep blue depths. Did I hear your family ask "what would you like for Christmas?" Well, here is the perfect gift for the diver who has tried it all.

THE MARINAIR "EXPLORER"

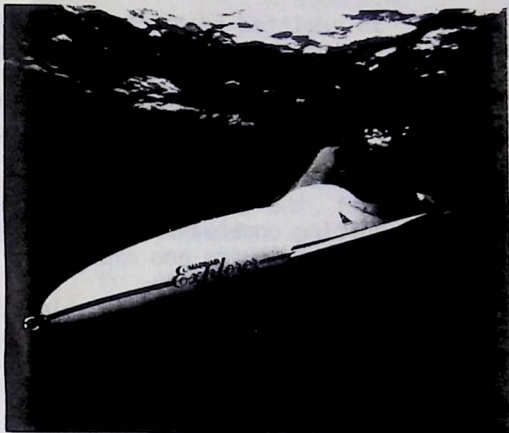
This 3.65 metre submersible, was designed by R.A.N. policeman, John Glennan for his own personal use. An experienced diver in his own right, Glennan developed the submarine from the belly of an aeroplane using a complicated cable-pulley system, 12 volt battery and motor.

Seeing the potential of the project on a commercial scale, Richard Wright, also an experienced diver, formed the company Marinair Pty.

Ltd. with the view to marketing a safe, durable and easily operated submarine.

Some 12 months and \$75,000 later, the company has had considerable success with the product and plans are underway for a second two-man model. The recently completed prototype of the two-man sub, "Seabuddy", weighs only slightly more than the "Explorer", is some 60 cms. longer and possesses much the same capabilities.

Weighing a mere 70 kilos, the Marinair is equipped with a proven electrical propulsion system powered by a 12 volt deep-cycle battery mounted in a hermetically sealed bulkhead that will operate the propulsion unit for three and a half hours. Excluding tide and current variables, the sub has a surface and



underwater speed of three knots and can dive to depths of 150 feet. A recent breakthrough in the form of a motor seal, enables the sub to now reach depths of 66 metres, however, Marinair has only endorsed the use of the submarine to 10 metres.

The cockpit of the "Explorer" is generously dimensioned incorporating storage for fins and a restraint belt. A depth gauge and compass are mounted on the dash board in close proximity to the joy stick steering.

Air is admitted to the buoyancy tanks through a three way valve, the tail of which is connected to the divers low pressure line.

The "Explorer" can be piloted by any diver holding an open water competency certificate. Marinair has produced 10 submarines since its inception and is currently working on another four to meet outstanding orders. Although it is primarily a "fun" boat, aimed at the leisure market, the Marinair is also ideal for transporting underwater cameras, lights and equipment for film-makers, researchers and explorers.

The price of the Marinair "Explorer" is \$4,125.00 excluding sales tax.*

DIVE/SOCIAL CALENDAR

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event/Location</u>	<u>Dive Captain</u>	<u>Meet At</u>
Dec 11	Sorrento/Head Area Followed by family Bar-B-Que.	Ross Luxford 059 71 1318	Sorrento 9.00 a.m.
Dec 15	General Meeting - North Melbourne Football Club Followed by refreshments on Yarra Bank. *Refreshment (food) supplied.		8.00 p.m.
Dec 26- Jan 8	V.S.A.G. trip to Streaky Bay, South Australia	Alex Talay 772 3085	
Dec 27	To be decided. Ring Mick on Boxing Day to obtain details.	Mick Jeacle 059 71 2786	9.00 a.m.
Jan 2	To be decided. Ring Don on New Years Day to obtain details.	Don Abell 29 4415	9.00 a.m.
Jan 15	Flinders	Doug Catherall 758 2690	9.00 a.m.
Jan 28, 29, 30	Refuge Cove	John Goulding 890 6634	Foster on evening of 27th Jan.
Feb 12	Sorrento/Submarines	I. Chernichov 306 1393	Sorrento 9.15 a.m.
Feb 26	Pinnacles	Pat Reynolds 789 1092	Newhaven 9.45 a.m.
Mar 11, 12, 13	Port Campbell	Paul Tipping 387 2027	Port Campbell
Mar 24, 25,26,27	Tidal River See separate notice.	Don Abell	