

FATHOMS

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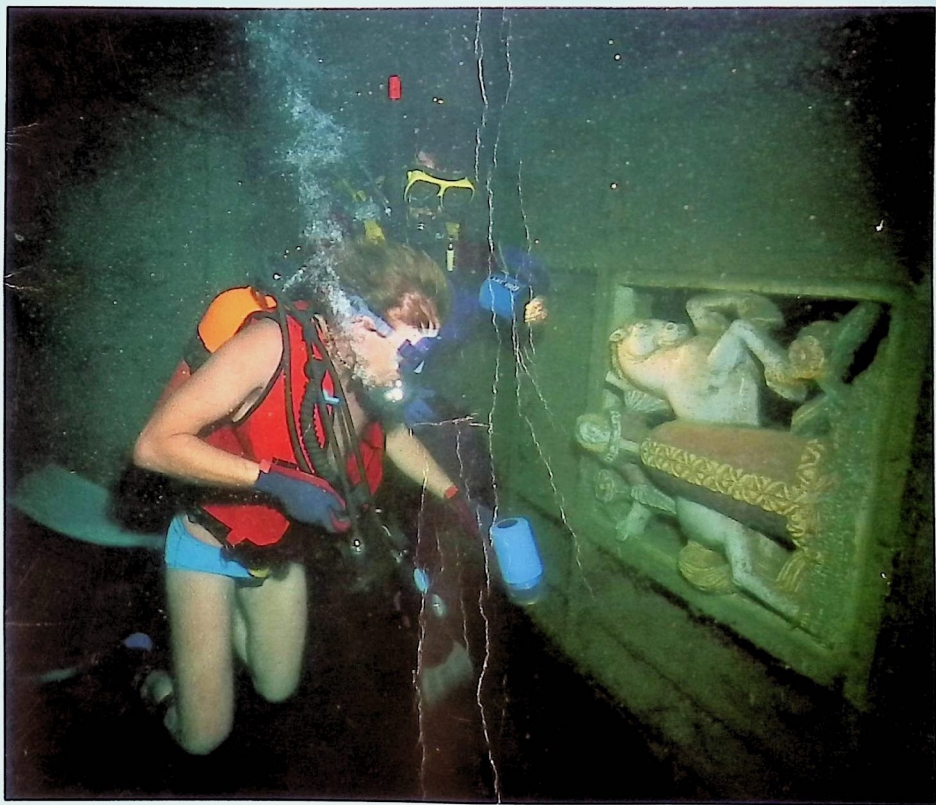


**INDEPENDENT
DIVING
FREEDOM**

Safety in Diving

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Box 2526W,
GPO Melbourne 3001*



VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

 FEB 1988

VSAG

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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.

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VSAG

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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.

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:

Thursday 18th February, 1988 8.00 p.m.
Thursday 17th March, 1988 8.00 p.m.
North Melbourne Football Club,
Fogarty Street, North Melbourne, 329 0266

Next committee meeting:

23rd February, 1988, Pat Reynold's,
14 Nurla Court, Frankston.
22nd March, 1988, Alex Talay's.

Editorial submissions to: "The Editor" Fathoms C/- 13 Birdwood Street,
Box Hill South, 3128.

EDITORIAL



For the first Fathoms for the year, let me start off by wishing all members a happy and prosperous New Year.

Already the Club year has started on a highly active note with what appears to have been a very successful trip north over Christmas/New Year to Byron Bay, and then followed by the 4 day long, long weekend to Refuge Cove over Australia Day.

The Club has also fielded a flotilla of small ships to go and watch the Tall Ships and is planning further trips to Wilsons Promontory and to the west coast during the daylight saving months.

So there is plenty of opportunity for all members to enjoy themselves this summer with some top diving.

For those who want to take a long shot on making a fortune out of a sort of "bottom-of-the-harbour" scheme, four well known Perth mining identities and a maritime historian have teamed up to launch a public float that will search for gold and silver bullion at the bottom of the sea. International Salvage Company wants to raise \$2 million to search for and recover fortunes from wrecks in the Indian Ocean which the Directors estimate is worth over \$200 million. Interested investors can contact the Perth Stock Exchange, however it does raise the issue of sea salvage! There are international laws relating to the recovery of bullion from "recent or modern" wrecks, but certainly the situation relating to salvage of ancient treasure is very unclear, and over the years has brought considerable heartache and financial loss to those who have sought it.

Perhaps one of the most famous or "infamous" of Australia's treasure hunters was the West Australian diver Allan Robinson who for years battled the Governments to have his treasure claims settled. If my memory serves me right, Robinson died a bitter and broken man, yet when I heard him give a lecture in 1980, I could not help but be impressed by the fight and tenacity of the man. Since those days of 1980, State Governments and the Federal Government have taken a

much keener interest in the wrecks around our coast, having gazetted many of them as being of historical importance and actually prohibiting divers from some wrecks altogether.

Now whilst this may be very worthwhile in some cases to allow historians, marine archaeologists and others to undertake their studies, wouldn't it be great for divers to be given a little more access to these wrecks especially since it's our Bicentennial Year, a year that has already presented such events that has made most Australians consider their history. In years gone by V.S.A.G. was heavily into wrecks and the Club undertook some salvage diving for the Victorian Government in raising one of the anchors of the Loch Ard. A unique feature of our coastline is the number of wrecks strewn around it. One can only hope that the heavy hand of bureaucracy does not restrict us any further in the future.

Editor

V.S.A.G. SOCIAL NIGHT AND "DOWNLOW MEDAL" PRESENTATION

6TH MAY // 6TH MAY // 6TH MAY // 6TH MAY // 6TH MAY //

Our first social night for members and friends of V.S.A.G. is tentatively arranged for FRIDAY NIGHT, 6TH MAY.

The format will be a "Bistro" style dinner followed by the "Downlow Medal" Winner Presentation for 1987.

The venue will be the famous "Whitehorse Inn" Hotel (What! You've never been there!?) on Burwood Road, Hawthorn.

We are working on invitations to have one or two Guest Speakers come along and hopefully we will have a sparkling (?!?) Master of Ceremonies to keep the show moving along.

Enter the date in your diary and more details will be announced in the next issue of your Fathoms.

John Lawler
Telephone: 569 9851
Social Secretary

COMMITTEE NEWS

Major points from the January Committee Meeting were as follows:

- * Des Williams is progressing with obtaining the loan of an underwater magnetometer to search for new wrecks.
- * Cash reserves of V.S.A.G. are \$3,516.25.
- * Dive Calendar was progressed (see details on last page).
- * Result of the V.S.A.G. Christmas Raffle was \$1,198.70.

This was an excellent result and the Social Secretary expressed thanks to all members who contributed by purchasing raffle tickets, and to our sponsors who generously donated prizes.*

FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING 18TH FEBRUARY

Dr. David Tuxen, Director of Intensive Care at the Alfred Hospital will give a presentation on the recompression chamber installed there.

This will be an interesting talk as at the time of writing the chamber is still not operational.

With so many people now diving in Victoria it is of concern that this major recompression facility is not operating.

Come along and find out answers to a few of the questions regarding the provision of recompression treatment in Victoria.

MINUTES OF S.D.F.-V. MEETING 1ST DECEMBER, 1987

by Des Williams
S.D.F.-V. Delegate

You may remember that this was a miserable day when Melbourne received torrential rain for most of the day. Let's hope this inclement weather was the reason for the very poor turn out at the S.D.F.-V. meeting. I was one of five people present! Therefore, no quorum and no meeting - so much for busting a gut to get to the meeting!

Informal discussion then followed:

- (a) Mussell dredging in the Bay has been terminated until at least 4th April, 1988, because of an unidentified virus in the shellfish. All mussel dredging will be terminated permanently after 1990 anyway.
- (b) The Alfred Hospital hyperbaric facility was opened on Thursday 26th November, 1987.
- (c) The Bi-Annual General Meeting of S.D.F.-V. will be held on 2nd February, 1988. They will be looking for office bearers, and already member clubs have received formal notice of the coming meeting.

Let's all hope the S.D.F.-V. can survive and grow.*

MINUTES OF S.D.F.-V. MEETING 2ND FEBRUARY, 1988

by Des Williams
S.D.F.-V. Delegate

At the recent S.D.F.-A. Annual Meeting attended by delegates from W.A., N.S.W., Vic., & S.A., it was decided to vigorously persue support for diver insurance. C.A.S. Insurances (Confederation of Aust. Sport) has a \$7.00 policy for divers. Names of divers and \$7.00 fees to be collected and given to S.D.F.-V. for onforwarding to C.A.S.

S.D.F. of W.A. pointed out that a Government Task Force on diver instruction now dictates that all instruction bodies must be N.C.A.S. accredited. S.D.F.-W.A. is now applying for N.C.A.S. standard as is the A.U.F.

Also new standards for teaching are being drafted in N.S.W.

S.D.F.-A. plans to hold a half yearly meeting at Darling Harbour in July. The next A.G.M. will be held in Melbourne in January 1989.

The National Park Plan (Marine Reserve) at Inverloch is now available for comment from the public. S.D.F.-V. discussed this matter and general opinion was to let this part of the coast go under protection; but the Department of Conservation, Forest & Lands should be requested to disclose their criteria, which they use to determine if an area must be protected. The new national park is to be called "Bunurong".

S.D.F.-V. still have not fielded a Club Representative to attend V.R.F.A.C. meetings, since Neil McKenzie had to resign. This problem must be addressed very shortly.

Michael Vize (Chairman) of S.D.F.-V. will not be continuing and the management must find a total of three people to run S.D.F.-V. The Board consists of 5 people and Michael Jackson and Pria Cardinagetti have said they will continue on. The situation is now very serious and the future of S.D.F.-V. is now in the hands of the 19 financial clubs.

Next venue for S.D.F.-V. meeting will be advised by mail very shortly.

Clubs represented at February 2nd, 1988 meeting were:-

V.S.A.G.	Underwater Explorers
Black Rock	Bass Strait
La Trobe Uni.	Box Hill
Bottom Scratchers	Bendigo Scuba Club
A.P.I.	Marine Diving
B.S.A.C. Melb.	Valley Divers *

TIP'S TIT-BITS

by Tony Tipping

Byron Bay, Christmas 1987

After the usual bash of parties and dinners during the month before Christmas it was great to get going at 7.00 a.m. on Sunday 20th December for a well earned holiday.

With two nights motelling it at Gilgandra and Casino along the way we drove into the Byron Bay Beach Resort at 9.30 a.m. on the Tuesday. That first day was spent setting up camp, organizing new pegs and tarps, fine tuning ropes etc. in case of the suspected cyclone (which incidentally never came). It didn't take long to get re-acquainted with the old place because after all it was our third trip there in four years - the town hadn't changed much but the camp certainly had. It had gone decidedly up market offering far more huts and units than camping facilities. The shaded sites we were allocated were still as good as you would get anywhere, but the amenities blocks had been let run down markedly compared to two years ago. Caravans will be gone altogether by now and tent sites will only remain unpowered down the side of the park near the creek because the management have just had plans approved to build a conference centre. On the plus side we had the use of two pools, tennis courts, horse riding facilities, a nine hole golf course, two restaurants, a bar and of course an excellent surf beach. When you pay \$336.00 for 20 nights in a tent one tends to question whether you need all these things. I think the prospect of going to South Australia next year sounds appealing with or without the above - all I need is a flat grassy camp site near a safe beach for kids and a clean dunny and shower.

The week or so leading up to the arrival of our fellow V.S.A.G. colleagues was fairly quiet - only one dive at the Mackerel Bowl, 50 foot visibility best for the trip, plus we did the usual family things and most importantly Father Christmas came to Marcus and Laura. Paul and Lesley along with Susie, Eliza, Cathie and Sophie were first to follow on Boxing Day after getting the train from Sydney then within 48 hours we were crowded out with the remainder of the troops turning up: Alex, Igor, Amanda and Raelene, Ross and Chris Luxford with Kerrilee and Tamara and finally Paul King and Robyn. Alex and Ross got there not without trailer and car problems respectively. One of the truly simple pleasures in life is to sit in a comfortable chair under a shady tree with an esky full of cold tinnies and watching your friends erect tents in the heat of the day!

The next two weeks provided a pretty enjoyable holiday for all - plenty of swimming either poolside or in the surf, tennis, golf (Pully and Alex played a round but I'm yet to receive a scorecard), a twilight horse riding trail where I believe Rae and Susie showed the others how - I was too chicken - haven't been on a horse since I was 17 and don't intend to re-start now! Igor's highlight was winning the Sexiest Legs in Camp competition - he won it pants down!

New Years Eve started at the R.S.L. Club for dinner then back to the party at camp where we were treated to 17 repeats of Smash Hits '87 on Alex's third world briefcase with compliments of one Kerrilee Luxford our resident D.J. Bad luck with New Year it had rained three days in a row then stopped just on midnight - this year being much wetter than last time. I think it rained eight out of 21 days compared to two last time. Never mind it dries quickly and it was always warm - never needed more than shorts and T-shirt.

The other big event (non diving) was Dreamworld. Marg organized a great day out for everyone - even the weather was perfect and the staff seemed so much more friendly than at Sea World where we went last time. It was a fun packed day 9.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m. and whether the water slide, the Thunderbolt, the Zulum or the Enterprise was the best ride everyone had a ball. I put the Grand Canyon film, the Wild Rapid ride and the water slides as my top picks; I'll give Dreamworld top place over Sea World, too. The same night Alex, Igor and the Luxfords kicked into Queensland coffers on the way home by spending a night at Jupiter's Casino.

Other bits and pieces worth a mention were Sophie's first birthday party - thanks Paul and Les and a farewell night at the pool restaurant - this is only worth a mention for the worst meal award. If you do go to Byron Bay Beach Resort keep away from the pool restaurant, it was woeful. In contrast we stopped a night coming home on the 11th January at Coonabarrabran where I had the best feed for years. One of those hick country pub dining rooms where we bought 2 x steak, eggs, onion, chips and salad - the rump steaks were bigger than the plates, fish and chips for 2 kids, several schooners, wine and soft drinks all for \$26.00! Best value in years!

The Diving

Byron Bay is rather unique on the east coast of Australia, because it faces north so when they get big southerlies, the water clears, also the surfies don't mind because the swells get up. This year we had our share of swells and visibility varied from 30 - 50 feet, not as good as last time. The Bay has the Julian Rocks plus several outlying reefs within 10 - 15 minutes by boat from a place called the Pass where boats are easily launched across the beach. I managed to dive on nine days and all but one was worthwhile (that one was the day we had fuel problems, then current, then we even missed Hook Rock our intended destination).

That first dive we did as a group of eight will be spoken about for years - Greg Blackburn our diving host couldn't anchor near the Cod Hole at Julian Rocks because of the swell, so we had to swim about 100 metres along the bottom to get there. Within minutes we came across a ten foot grey nurse shark not in any hurry, who spent about two minutes cruising around and between us ever so gracefully and close enough to touch - those with cameras had a field day although only one of my shots came out clearly, my excuse being the overcast day and lack of good light at 60 feet. The Cod Hole was great as usual - I think you'd be struggling to find a single dive location where the density or volume of fish is any greater than here. Pully just may have fluked a shot of six morays coming out of one hole to greet him and if he messed it up Igor will have snapped it. On that same dive I managed to sit on an eight foot wobby before I saw it - they're always good for a laugh aren't they? When you're diving in a group of ratbags like us the best thing to do is stir the wobby first - they always seem to take off after your buddy, I found the torch, the ideal weapon to belt them over the head. On other dives around the Rocks and nearby reefs we saw another seven foot grey nurse, schools of kingfish, jewies - they were enormous, batfish which just hang in mid-water all over the place, more wobbies, lots of pretty little coloured tropical fish and Ross and Igor saw a giant cod about 500 lb; how Pully and I missed it I'll never know because we were all together. As a photographer my major complaint is too much junk like wrasse or red morwong get in your way when you want to snap something worthwhile.

The other dive I wish to elaborate in more detail was our last for the trip at the Cape Byron Pinnacle. This time I was on anchor duty (first time in three trips) and after missing the marks once Greg tried again where I did as he said and "let her go!", I let her go all right and watched the rope and anchor disappear into 140 foot of water. I suggest they buoy the end of the rope like we do out the Heads when we dive in currents. By the way they wouldn't know what a bloody current was in N.S.W.! The Pinnacle dive was a beauty despite a $1\frac{1}{2}$ knot current on the bottom and when you dive down with no pick it's hard work. That's why I surfaced after five minutes, I was buggered Ross, and besides you do aerobics three mornings a week! Never mind, after a 20 minute surface interval Ross and I had another five minutes down there with the big kingies. Alex and Igor had just as big a thrill although we all missed out on seeing those elusive bronze whalers.

Finally, a worthy plug for the Byron Bay Dive Centre - Greg and Penny Blackburn run the most efficient scuba diving service on the east coast. Some of this is luck i.e. close proximity to some pretty good dive territory, but they also put in plenty of hours keeping four top dive boats all capable of taking 10 divers out and back to the nearby reefs in a turnaround time of about two hours. They regularly run boats at five intervals per day and with friendly folk like Ross who drives a desk, Hugo, Bill and Grant who can tolerate our home grown V.S.A.G. nonsense it all makes it more enjoyable. Greg did make a special effort to look after us - we got a discount and priority times most days at 9.00 a.m. - plenty of other divers were turned away because the centre was booked solidly - not only that, but I think we can feel privileged because no one else had ventured to the Pinnacle for about three months.

All in all we had some pretty interesting dives, so for anyone who gets odd leave times take Greg's advice and dive from Easter through to winter when conditions are at their best, but if you say you're from V.S.A.G. you are likely to be hit for the cost of a 200 foot rope and anchor!*

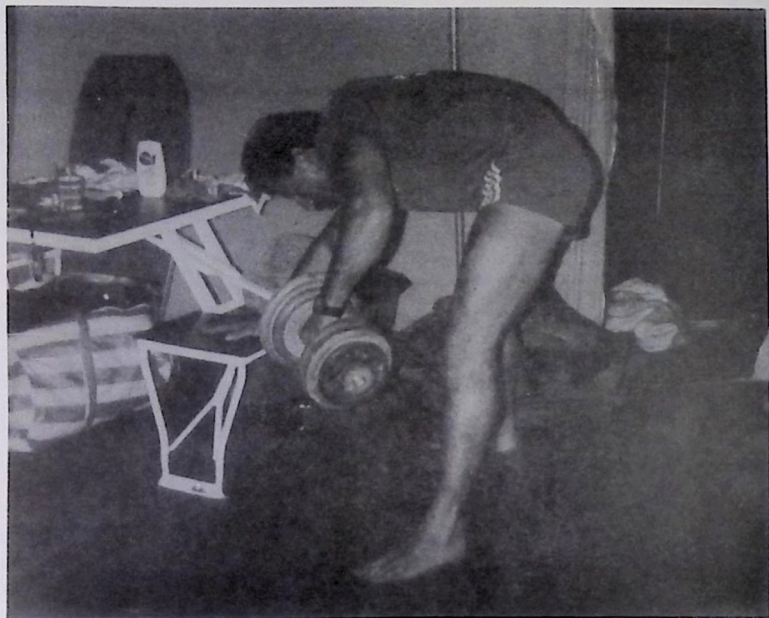
Editor's Note

Tony, for the anchor man to lose his anchor it just means you're out of practice. Would all boat owners please note and give Tippo this keenly sought after job when next he's on your boat.

SNAPS FROM BYRON BAY



ALEX IS SO PROUD OF HIS NEW TRAILER, THAT WHEN HE CAUGHT A DOG LIFTING HIS LEG ON ONE OF THE WHEELS - HE THROUGH AWAY THE WHEEL!



IGOR PUMPING IRON - AS IF HE DIDN'T GET ENOUGH EXERCISE.



ROSS LUXFORD IN ONE OF HIS SEXIER POSES - TRYING LIKE HELL TO HOLD HIS GUT IN!



Laura SAUSAGE - TAKING AFTER HER OLD MAN.

MEDIA WATCH

Divers' bends unit lies idle

THE Alfred Hospital's new decompression chamber is out of action — two months after being installed.

The chamber, which has been used on at least 12 divers, is sitting idle because the hospital has been unable to train enough staff in the specialised area, according to Dr Chris Brook of the director of medical services office.

Victorian patients suffering from the bends will be flown to the nearest

By AMANDA PLACE

available decompression unit, usually Adelaide, for treatment until the Alfred can re-open its chamber.

It will probably be closed for about two weeks, or until more staff are trained, Dr Brook said yesterday.

Up to 50 per cent of staff applying to work in the chamber have been declared medically unfit.

An otherwise minor ailment, like a middle ear problem, prevents many

applicants from meeting the strict and rigorous requirements of decompression work.

Thirty people, both medical and nursing staff, have been trained so they can go into the chamber with a patient suffering from the bends.

There is a minimum of two staff required to operate the chamber — one inside and one outside. Both must be trained in decompression technique.

"All these staff are on call 24 hours a day, seven

days a week while continuing with normal working duties," Dr Brook said.

The nurse or doctor in the chamber with the patient experiences the same increase in pressure as the bends victim.

Both are then subjected to a gradual decrease in pressure until the patient no longer suffers from bubbling nitrogen in the blood — a symptom of the bends.

"If a person rises too quickly from a depth in the ocean, excess gas is released too quickly — like lemonade fuming from a bottle," Dr Brook said.

The nitrogen bubbles can lodge anywhere in the body — they can block blood vessels and often cause tremendous pain.

The victim and medical attendant must stay in the chamber for a minimum of six hours, according to Dr Brook.

"The Alfred is committed to serving Victorians but unfortunately we have reached a critical point where we cannot service this piece of equipment constantly."

"The Sun", Monday 11th January, 1988.

Bay shellfish to be tested for lethal toxins

By LETH YOUNG,
environment reporter

Health authorities here warned against eating shellfish and setting up a public health alert after findings this week of high water concentrations of a potentially lethal algae.

Samples have been sent to toxicology laboratories in Adelaide, Perth and Melbourne, and probably by tomorrow, whether the algae is producing neurotoxins capable of killing humans.

The species of algae has not been identified, but it is known before, but "blooms" or sudden increases of similar phytoplankton in Tasmania in 1986 closed shellfish farms for up to six months.

The research manager at the Marine Research Centre in Queensland, Dr Doug Bull, said the algae had been found at beaches between Ailsea and Franklin.

It had not spread to commercial Peninsular but samples had been sent to Adelaide for routine testing. As the commercial scallop harvesting season finished in shops and restaurants were from cold storage and were safe.

Dr Bullhaus said scientists began testing for algae after several deaths in the last week of brown siccation in the water in parts of the bay. The species, *Alexandrium Jundayense*, is unknown in Australia but was quickly identified by a "yelling

point" taste. Concentrated in shellfish by their filter feeding, these poisons in humans consumers can cause gastro-intestinal and neurological illness. There have been deaths in the United States and Canada from paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) caused by toxic plankton blooms.

"Victoria's scallop, chiton, and mussel harvesters are aware there was no threat to swimmers who accidentally swallowed algae in sea water." "But if this bloom turns out to be toxic, it could be very dangerous for people who eat shellfish from pliers and along the shores."

He warned groups who traditionally gathered by shellfish to take particular care and to avoid Dr Bullhaus said scientists did



experts from Copenhagen, Dr Bullhaus said. The scientists leave at Melbourne University's botany department.

Although sometimes safe, under certain conditions that are not understood the algae produces

not know what sparked the blooms, but they might be linked to favorable temperatures and nutrients in the water. The worst affected areas were Bolong Bay and the Peninsular.

The health risk would stand until the algae died out. Monitoring would continue and the commercial harvesting season would be closed as any sign of an outbreak recurred.

A spokesman for the CSIRO said that toxic plankton blooms had become a fact of life in the temperate waters of the Northern Hemisphere. They occurred on a seasonal basis.

No one knew how they occurred in Australia, but the spread of the algae might be aided by ballast water from ships.

"The Age", 13th January, 1988.

Speargun threats

GOVERNMENT officers have been threatened with spearguns screwdrivers and knives while trying to stop illegal fishing in Port Phillip Bay.

Conservation, Forests and Lands staff yesterday detailed several incidents in which their lives had been threatened by abalone and shellfish poachers in recent months.

The department fears the increasing violent poachers are trying to sell shellfish contaminated with a potentially deadly algae to unsuspecting restaurants.

The poachers, most of them Vietnamese, operate throughout the Bay but it is believed there are about six "hot spots" where gov-

ernment officers have been threatened.

"The threat to your life is always there," Fisheries and Wildlife technical officer Tony Zidarich said yesterday.

"There have been situations where our people have had spearguns aimed at them.

"They (the poachers) seem to have an increasing disregard for the law and that makes for more discomfort among the officers."

Although no officer has been seriously injured, there is a general feeling in the department that the confrontations are becoming more violent.

The officers' fears are coupled with a growing concern that the poachers are trying to sell off

shellfish containing the toxic algae discovered in the Bay last week.

The Government has warned ethnic groups of the potentially lethal shellfish in the north-east of the Bay.

But the department's Melbourne regional manager, Mr Jim Allinson, expressed fears yesterday some poachers were still operating in the Bay and ignoring the algae problem.

"Some restaurants may be receiving shellfish from these illegal sources rather than through the normal commercial outlets," Mr Allinson said.

He said the violent incidents between the poachers and department officers seemed to be increasing.

"I do know of incidents where staff have been threatened with

screwdrivers and knives or whatever has been used to prise the shellfish from the rocks around the Bay," he said.

Police had to be called in at least once a week to assist the officers, Mr Allinson said.

Department officers investigating illegal fishing on the Bay never operated alone and usually travelled in pairs or groups of three.

Mr Zidarich said the incidents stemmed from a lack of communication.

"These people have a particular ethnic perception of what they can do with the natural resources in their country of origin," he said.

"When they are told they can't do it here they object strongly."

Mr Allinson said about 60 poachers were awaiting prosecution in the Melbourne metropolitan area alone.

"The Sun", 20th January, 1988.

THE DAY OF THE TALL SHIPS

by John Goulding

On the morning of Wednesday 30th December Port Phillip Bay was draped in a still mistiness as I made my way to Sorrento to meet up with Barry Truscott and Bob Scott. Our plan was to launch our boats early, cruise down to Portsea and await Mick Jeacle and his crew on board Alex's Leeder to come down the Bay from Carrum.

On board I had Dave Carroll; ex V.S.A.G. member and sailing ship buff and my father-in-law who had never been in anything smaller than a Bass Strait Ferry. Bazza had the female half of his family; Marie and Samantha, and Bob had a shore based June and mother-in-law.

We anchored in the moorings area of Portsea right in front of the Portsea Pier, amongst the splendour of flashy boats all sporting their Aussie Flags. Not that we really notice, but I guess we had to give them a passing glance as they looked with somewhat disdain towards my unique craft complete with folding deck chairs and beach umbrella.

The peace was soon disturbed when Mick arrived with Annie and Samantha and 3 of the sleaziest boaties ever to grace the shores of Portsea; Pat, Doug and Peter Jones.

With still 5 hours to wait before the Ships were due to enter the Bay, we headed over to Queenscliff to inspect 3 of the vessels that had arrived earlier.

At Queenscliff, hundreds of spectator craft were either buzzing around these visitors from Western Australia, New Zealand and Ireland or had taken up position to view the procession into the Bay which was to take place later in the day.

At about 3.00 p.m. these ships up anchored and sailed out through the Heads to join the fleet that was coming up the coast. A little later we followed and for only the second time ever I donned my life jacket and made my crew do the same. Whilst the ocean was not rough one could see that it was going to get pretty hairy out there with all those spectator boats and if we were going to get in "real close" to get some photos, we at least wanted to look a little bit responsible when the police patrol boats would undoubtedly give chase.

We joined the mustering fleet some 8 - 10 miles out to sea in what was an awe inspiring romance with a by-gone era. Here out in Bass Strait some 8 or so Tall Ships sailed before the wind on a steady beat towards the narrow entrance of Port Phillip Bay. On board each ship was one of the Bay Pilots who would guide his charge through the same waters that many years ago had claimed so many elegant windjammers.

We circled, darted and weaved in and out and around these majestic ships, snapping off photos and trying to keep at least a couple of metres away from everything else that moved on the water. Our boat radios enabled the entire V.S.A.G. party to remain in contact, even though it was hopeless to maintain visual contact in the seething mass of flotilla. The closer we got to the Heads the busier the waterways became and a couple of "keep clear" calls from the police gave us a good indication that we didn't need telescopic lenses for our cameras.

In all my boating days I have never experienced such wild excitement. Even father-in-law, who by this time had let go one hand of the rope was really enjoying himself, and was yelling out, - "Wait 'til I tell the boys in Ballarat about this"!

Inside the Bay again, we rested for a while near Point Lonsdale and had a well earned beer before hurtling off down the Bay to follow the fleet to Rye.

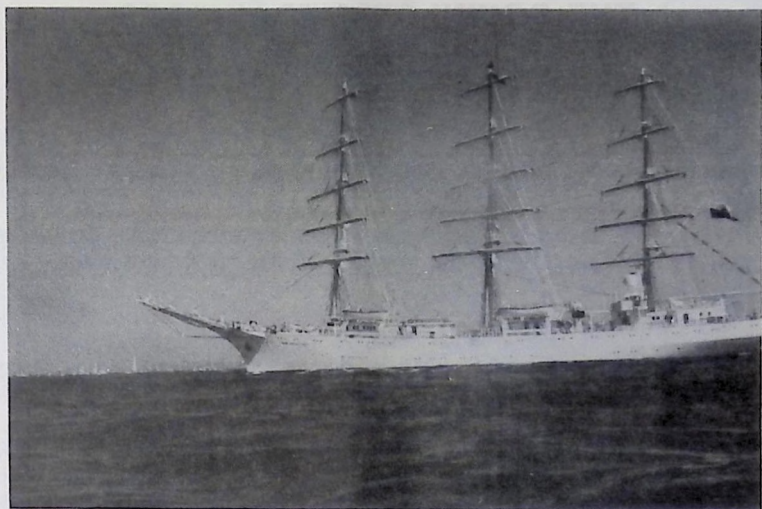
On both the Point Lonsdale/Queenscliff and Portsea/Sorrento shorelines not a square inch of land was free of the thousands of spectators who had come to watch this amazing spectacle. Was it only that all of these people had flocked to distant vantage points to view some funny old sailing ships, or was it Australia reaching out to reflect on its roots?

Today 6th January as I sat in my lonely office, my eyes strained between the grey and brown high rise buildings I caught a glimpse of the great square rigger "Dar Młodzieży" sailing down the Bay on her trip to Hobart. That contrast captured for a moment the dramatic change that has occurred in our society and to our country since these grand ships were frequent visitors to our shores.

Editor's Note

John, the First Fleet Re-enactment Ships will be visiting Port Phillip Bay in March, maybe you could toss a few whales into your next report and we'll all have a good cry.





THE DOWNLOW MEDAL 1988

PROGRESSIVE RESULTS

by John Lawler

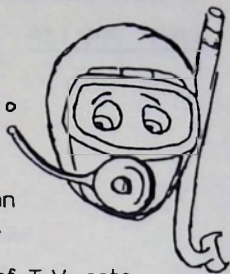
The Downlow Medal race for 1988 is really on and already the pace is hot.

With two major diving events, Byron Bay and Refuge Cove behind us and tallied, here are the places in order of the number of dives completed.

(1)	Ross Luxford	11
(2)	Fiona Bruce	8
	Alex Talay	8
(3)	Mick Jeacle	7
	Bill Hayes	7
	Andy Mastrowicz	7
(4)	Charlie Brincat	6
	Jack Namiota	6
	Rae Lawson	6
	Amanda Tutton	6
	Pat Reynolds	6
	Barry Truscott	6
(5)	Tony Tipping	5
	Bob Scott	5
	Doug Catherall	5
	Chris Llewellyn	5
(6)	John Goulding	4
	Igor Chernichov	4
	Jenny Large	4
	Peter Jones	4
	Paul Sier	4
	Anthony Finnegan	4
(7)	Dave Moore	3
	Paul Tipping	3
	Warren Cannan	3
	John Lawler	3
(8)	Geoff Birtles	1
	Don Abell	1

V.S.A.G. Club Total - 142 Dives

FLOTSAM & JETSAM



Will V.S.A.G. ever be able to hold its head high again after the spectacle that some of its members displayed on the Refuge Cove Beach on the morning of Australia Day.

Whilst the rest of the nation remained fixed to millions of T.V. sets to watch the First Fleet arrive in Sydney, members of our Group staged their own re-enactment of the landing. Complete with wild aborigines, stuffed parrots and even more stuffed actors. Captain Phillip and his merry men went through their paces under what was probably the largest crowd on the Refuge Beach since Reg Truscott wore a top hat and tails.

Just in case you were one of the not so lucky ones who missed out by special arrangement with the Royal Refuge Cove Repatory Theatre Company it is my great embarrassment to reproduce the V.S.A.G. version of the re-enactment of the First Fleet landing.

Billy Shake-D-Spear

THE FIRST AUSTRALIA DAY

CAPT. PHILLIP

(Stepping ashore from Row Boat - other crew in boat follow):

AAH, THANK GOD ... AT LAST WE'RE HERE -

THIS CALLS FOR AN ICY COLD BEER!

NO LONGER DO WE NEED TO LOOK

FOR WE HAVE FOUND THE SOUTH LAND AS DESCRIBED
BY COOK.

1ST MATE

CAPT'N, CAPT'N, ONE MOMENT PLEASE, I DO BEG
BUT THE COOK (huff) CAN'T EVEN BOIL A BLOODY EGG!
SO WHY HAVE WE FOLLOWED HIM TO THIS GODFORSAKEN
PLACE,
I TELL YOU, BOSS, IT'S A FLAMIN DISGRACE.

CAPT. PHILLIP NOT THAT COOK YOU AGITATOR,
BUT CAPTAIN COOK, THE GREAT NAVIGATOR -
WHO WROTE OF THIS LAND OF MILK AND HONEY
WHERE WE CAN ALL GET RICH WITH HEAPS OF MONEY

(Pause)

NOW FIRST MY LADS, WE MUST DO ONE THING,
WE MUST CLAIM THIS LAND IN THE NAME OF THE KING.
THEN WE MUST BUILD A CAMP FROM TREES
AND CULTIVATE THE SOIL BY GROWING PEAS.

2ND MATE (Hopping around holding groin):
TALKING OF PEAS, I THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER ASK,
FOR I'VE GOT SOME WATER TO PASS.

NARRATOR (With that, the 2nd Mate piddles over a sacred
Aboriginal site - thus starting off the great
debate over Aboriginal land rights - an issue
that was to haunt white settlement in this
country for ever more).

NARRATOR (From the bushes appears members of the "Lost
the Lot" Aboriginal tribe).

ABORIGINAL
CHIEF HEY, PISS OFF YOU POMMIE POOF,
UNLESS YOU WANT MY BOYS TO GET TOOF.
FOR YOU'RE PIDDLING ALL OVER UNCLE HARRY'S GRAVE,
AND IF HIS WIDOWS SEE YOU THEY'LL RANT AND RAVE.
BESIDES, WE WERE HERE FIRST AND THIS LAND IS OURS
WHY, SEE THAT PIECE OF BARK? WELL THAT'S MY HOUSE!

YOUNGER

(Pushes Chief to one side) ...

ABORIGINALHANG ON POP, DON'T BE A SNOB,
WATCH MY STYLE, I'LL CON THIS MOB -

(Walk towards Phillip)

G'DAY MATEY, I'M A WHEELER DEALER,

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE A NICE CLEAN SHEILA?

OR PERHAPS YOU'D LIKE A DIRTY PICTURE -

FAR MORE INTERESTING THAN A FOOTY FIXTURE.

OR PERHAPS A PET TIGER SNAKE - COULD BE YOURS TODAY,

HOW ABOUT A BOOMERANG THAT ONLY GOES ONE WAY?

(Captain Phillip turns his head & snorts)

(Pause)

NOT INTERESTED AY? THEN IN THIS YOU'LL BE:

ALL THE LAND YOU WANT - AS FAR AS YOU CAN SEE.

(Pause)

IN RETURN - ALL I WANT IS A MIRROR AND YOUR HAT.

CAPT. PHILLIPSOLD! MY BOY - I'LL BUY THAT!NARRATOR

(So in the first takeover deal transacted in the new colony, the short-sighted Captain bought 3 acres of crab infested mud flats, and began to bring ashore his cargo of the flotsam and jetsam of British prisons before the incoming tide reduced his purchase to just ½ an acre).

3RD MATE

(Dragging convict girl #1 ashore):

AAH, MY PRETTY LITTLE CONVICT WENCH -

DESPITE THE FACT OF YOUR ROTTEN STENCH

(Sings):

3RD MATE

(Sing)

I'LL BUILD YOU A HOME
WHERE THE KANGAROOS ROAM
AND THE EMUS AND GOANNAS PLAY
WHERE SELDOM WILL BE HEARD
THE SOUND OF A FALLING TURD
'CAUSE THE DUNNY WILL BE SOUND PROOFED WITH CLAY.

1ST CONVICTGIRL

BE DAMNED YOU DOG - YOU HAVEN'T GOT A CHANCE
FOR I'M NOT IMPRESSED WITH WHAT'S IN YOUR PANTS!
I'D RATHER BE A SLAVE TO THAT ABO CHIEF
AT LEAST HIS LOOKS LIKE SOME WELL HUNG BEEF.

1ST CONVICTMAN

(Talking to other Convicts)

NOW LISTEN LADS TO WHAT I HAVE TO TELL,
I HEAR THIS PLACE IS WORSE THAN HELL,
FOR THERE AINT NO PUBS OR HOUSES OF FUN -
NOW IS THE CHANCE FOR US TO RUN.

WHILST THEY GO ABOUT AND HOIST THEIR FLAG,
WE'LL GO AND PINCH ALEX'S JAG.
AND HEAD FOR THE BUSH WITH A BOTTLE OF WHISKY -
THEY'LL NOT CHANCE IT IN THERE - IT'S TOO RISKY.

2ND CONVICTGIRL

(in a squaky voice):

IF IT'S RISKY FOR THEM, WHY NOT US??

1ST CONVICTMAN

BECAUSE THEY'LL HAVE TO CATCH THE LOCAL BUS,
AND FROM WHAT I HEAR THEY'LL WAIT IN VAIN -
BECAUSE IT'S ABOUT AS REGULAR AS THE PORT
MELBOURNE TRAIN.

CAPT. PHILLIP

WHAT'S THIS I HEAR OF MUTINY AND PLUNDER?
YOU SHOULD FEEL LUCKY THAT I BROUGHT YOU DOWN UNDER.
IN 20 YEARS OR SO, IF YOU SUCCEED,
YOU'LL BECOME FREE MEN AND WOMEN, AND ABLE TO BREED.
YOU CAN FILL THIS COUNTRY WITH LITTLE WHITE AUSSIES .

(slaps face)

THAT'S IF YOU DON'T GET EATEN BY THE MOSSIES!

BOTANIST

(In queer, poofy voice - prances up to Capt. Phillip)

CAPTAIN, CAPTAIN - OH GREAT LEADER,
AS YOU KNOW, I'M NOT MUCH OF A BREEDER!
BUT I'VE COME IN SEARCH OF FLOWERS TO PLUCK,
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN GAINING FREEDOM FOR A (pause)
.....F-F-F-F-FARTHING!

ABORIGINAL
CHIEF

(Turning to young Aboriginal)

SEE! IT TOLD YOU BOY, THEY'RE BLOODY QUEER,
YOU SHOULD NEVER HAVE LET THEM SETTLE HERE.
THE NEXT THING WE KNOW THEY'LL BE ALL OVER THE
PLACE -
THEY'LL BE THE RUIN OF OUR GRAND RACE.

MORE WILL COME FROM WHERE THEY ARE FROM -
BOAT LOADS OF THE BASTARDS WILL INVADE THE PROM.
THEY'LL CLAIM AYRES ROCK AS IF IT WERE THEIR OWN,
AND DRIVE US FROM OUR ANCESTRAL HOME.

(All other crew convicts and aboriginals start mingling).