

FATHOMS

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INDEPENDENT
DIVING
FREEDOM

Safety in Diving

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VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

JUN 1980

VSAG

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Box 2526W, G.P.O., Melbourne 3001



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 16th June 8.00 p.m.
Thursday 21st July 8.00 p.m.
North Melbourne Football Club,
Fogarty Street, North Melbourne

Next committee meetings

21st June - Des William's Place.
26th July - Paul Tipping's Place.
122 Garton Street, Carlton

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EDITORIAL

This issue we have an interesting line-up of articles submitted by members relating to Club activities over April and May, together with a very topical and serious article by our President, Mick Jeacle.

It was only in February when the Head of the Intensive Care Unit at the Alfred Hospital, Dr. David Tuxen gave a very frank and informative talk to the Club on the risks associated with the "bends". (See report in Fathoms April/May).

From Dr. Tuxen's talk and Mick Jeacle's account of his own experience of a mild "hit of the bends" we should be much the wiser. My thanks to Mick for relating his story.



Once again V.S.A.G. has scored a terrific coup with the successful trip to dive the wreck of the Russian cruise ship "Mikhail Lermontov" in New Zealand.

The V.S.A.G. trip organised by Des Williams was the first Australian group to visit this wreck and despite fairly dirty water and some quite adverse weather conditions, the report of this trip and the video film taken by Des' brother Geoff clearly indicate an exciting and very successful event.

The ability of V.S.A.G. to mount these overseas trips requires a great deal of time and effort on the part of the organisers. In a couple of month's time Alex Talay will lead another group of members to the Solomons - further proof of the excellent diving opportunities enjoyed by V.S.A.G. members. Closer to home another new diving spot will be visited when the Club goes to Streaky Bay in South Australia at Christmas time. Streaky Bay is regarded as one of the best diving locations on the Great Australian Bight. Set below a majestic coastline the bay and ocean waters have earned an enviable reputation as a top fishing spot, whilst the underwater terrain is said to be abundant with crayfish is sure to provide members with many memorable experiences.

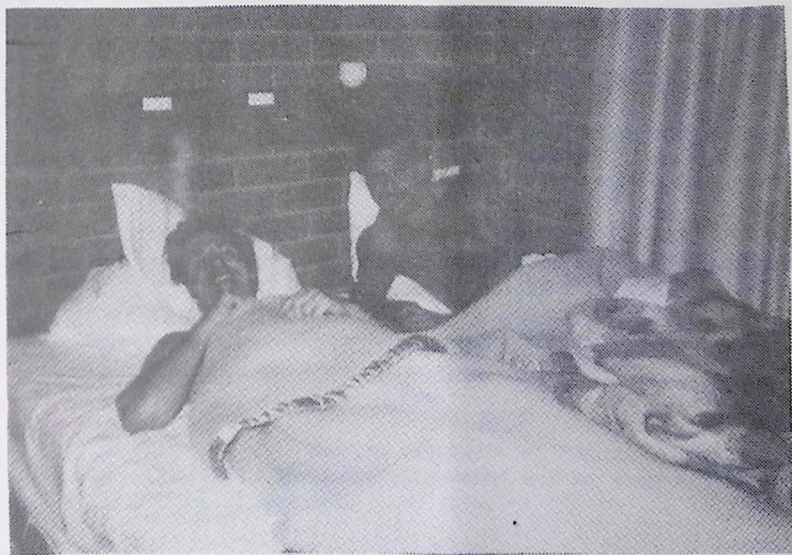
Talking about memorable experiences, I would like to introduce into Fathoms a "picture of the issue".

For each issue of Fathoms I would like members to provide a photo of a club member or members participating in the activities of V.S.A.G. The pictures don't need to be underwater shots - but they should be a candid shot which tells a story on its own. Sort of a pictorial Flotsam & Jetsam!!

This issue I am pleased to get the ball rolling by including the following shot of Alex and Igor taken at Port Campbell in March.

Questions one should ask are:-

- Why is Alex smiling like a cheshire cat?
- What is he covering up?
- Why do they call Igor the Russian Husky?
- Who is playing the dominant role?
- What happened next!??
- Does this mean that Pat Reynolds is on the outer?



The Club's wine promotion has been an outstanding success. As at the end of May, club members had placed orders for 214 dozen bottles resulting in a profit of \$2,568.00 for the Club. This has been singularly the most lucrative fund raising activity in the Club's history. Apart from members purchases for their own personal consumption, there have been some very large orders placed by a few members who actively solicited sales from friends, work colleagues etc. An excellent result in all and again thanks to President, Mick for recognizing a great opportunity.

John Goulding

CLUB MEMBER NOTICES

PAUL TIPPING has moved from Carlton to Carlton.
Paul's new address is:- 122 Garton Street,
North Carlton
Telephone: 387 2027

BARRY TRUSCOTT has moved.
Barry's new phone number is 782 2549.

PETER JONES - ex-manager of the Coach and Horses
Hotel in Ringwood has been appointed General Manager -
Brewing Operations for the Billabong Hotel Group.

COMMITTEE NEWS

The following points are extracts from the April and May Committee Meetings.

The closed season for crayfish this year will be:-

Females	1st June to 15th November.
Males	1st October to 15th November.

Noted shipwreck and maritime historian will not be available for the June General Meeting owing to a very heavy public speaking schedule. Instead he has been booked for May 1989 and will talk on the subject

"SMUGGLERS & WRECKERS"

The Club will investigate the purchase of a caving reel, which apart from its obvious use for cave diving will also be useful for wreck penetration diving.

On future Easter trips, boat owners will NOT be exempt from tank filling duties.

By the May Committee Meeting (24/5/88) the Club had sold 214 dozen bottles of wine resulting in a profit of \$2,568.00 to the Club.

Total cash reserves of the Club at 25/5/88 stood at \$4,676.85.

Streaky Bay in South Australia is confirmed as the venue for the 1988 Christmas trip.

V.S.A.G. members are currently leading in the Downlow Award Competition and leading scorers are:-

Alex Talay, Doug Catherall, Fiona Bruce	- 24
John Lawler	- 23
Mick Jeacle, Don Abell, Ross Luxford	- 19
Pat Reynolds, Igor Chernichov	- 17

Tentative date of 2nd December has been set for the V.S.A.G. Christmas function. Suggestions for a suitable venue will be sought from members at the June General Meeting.

A membership application from Peter Mastrowicz was accepted pending completion of a successful check-out dive.

Club car stickers, hats, T-shirts and windcheaters will be available for sale at forthcoming general meetings.*

V.S.A.G. ELECTIONS - 1988

The V.S.A.G. Committee elections will be held at the September General Meeting (Annual General Meeting) on September 15th.

The Committee Members required to stand down are:-

Mick Jeacle
Barry Truscott
Des Williams
Alex Talay

Members are asked to give consideration to committee nomination. Further details can be obtained from Don Abell, Club Secretary.

DECOMPRESSION SICKNESS IT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU

by Mick Jeacle

Having recently experienced a minor hit of the "Bends" on the Anzac weekend, I feel compelled to relay my story to all members in the hope that future incidents will not occur.

On Saturday I dived a particularly good spot in the "Heads" area, and at the time the current was virtually non existant, my maximum bottom time was 22 minutes and maximum depth reached was 100 feet. Blind Freddie can tell you that this dive was 3 minutes inside the no decompression limit and that it should only be considered as safe.

For various reasons I did not dive again that day and we retired the boats quite early, with yours truly feeling fine and looking forward to a few beers and a hearty meal back at the caravan.

Following dinner I began to feel extremely tired and at around 8.15 p.m. I thought I'd just lay back on the bed for a while to charge the batteries in readiness for the usual celebrations that form part of all V.S.A.G. trips away. That was the end of me and I slept right through until 7.00 a.m. the next morning.

On the Sunday I dived to 80 feet for 40 minutes, which is right on the limit. The dive was very leisurely and was also in virtually slack water. After returning to the boat Charlie and Fiona indicated they would like to dive again, and before long they again entered the water.

About 30 minutes later I began to feel quite a deal of discomfort in the abdomen area, so much so that I could not bear to keep my wetsuit on. Upon removing my suit I noticed a rather extensive rash on the abdomen. At this point I was convinced that I had been affected by the dreaded "Bends" and reached for the oxygen. When Fiona and Charlie returned Fiona agreed with my diagnosis and suggested we return to shore and telephone for advice.

Whilst it has been suggested that divers call 008 088 200 in case of a diving emergency, I'm afraid I cannot recommend it. Following an unbelievable "run around" when I finally got on to a Doctor at his home, he calmly suggested I was too far away and would really be much

better off to phone the Alfred Hospital. This I did and was advised to sit it out for the present, but to again contact them should any change occur.

On Tuesday morning whilst dressing for work I felt a sharp pain in the neck, which continued to severely restrict my movements for days to come. Following some manipulation by a bone crusher, which incidentally only made matters worse, I wondered whether this could be another symptom. I again telephoned the Alfred and spoke to David Tuxen who suggested I immediately come in for tests.

Following a series of tests, and after telling my story (the whole truth and nothing but the truth) the examining Doctor confirmed that I had received a minor bout, most likely on the Saturday, and then aggravated by Sunday's dive.

At this point, let us examine the possible causes in my case, and indeed the symptoms.

Known causes:

- (i) Age, (ii) Alcohol, (iii) Pushing the tables.
- (i) At the very young age of 42, I hardly think this to be a contributing factor. But we should always keep this in the back of our minds that maybe we should be looking toward a more conservative approach as we get older.
- (ii) Alcohol - In this case the most likely offender. Friday night was a fairly heavy night at the caravan, with the last of the revellers mumbling off into the darkness at 1.00 a.m.
- (iii) Clearly, I did not push the tables on the Saturday dive. However, a fair percentage of "Bends" cases occur inside the no decompression limits. Remember, the tables are recommended for young, extremely fit navy divers. Perhaps I was unlucky on that day and this too must be considered a likely cause.

Symptoms

- (i) Tiredness, (ii) Rash, skin blotches, (iii) Pains in the joints.

- (i) I failed to recognize tiredness as a possible symptom on the Saturday night. After only one dive, in hindsight, there is no way I should have flaked out at 8.15 p.m. even after a hard night on Friday.
- (ii) Rash or blotchiness - Pretty hard to dismiss, particularly as a quick inspection of the wetsuit revealed no grass seeds or the like.
- (iii) Caused a panic for a while, but in my case, a mere coincidence. Seems I slept the wrong way or ricked my neck whilst dressing.

So, how many of you have noticed any of the above over the years and ignored it?, albeit unintentionally?

I for one will in future be more aware of the diver's plight and will adopt a more conservative approach. Five minutes off the bottom time, followed by a deco stop at 10 feet for a couple of minutes, even whilst current diving, will be my plan for future deep dives. Then if this doesn't work, maybe I'll have to drink light beer the night before.

I hope this article has made everybody more aware of the dangers of deep diving, even though you may think you are following all the rules. Remember, it can happen to you!*

FOR SALE

NIKONOS III UNDERWATER CAMERA

Perfect working order - one owner since new and kept in as new condition.

\$400.00

* Also, bulb flash unit complete, at no extra charge if you want it.

RING DES WILLIAMS - 551 3201

"MIKHAIL LERMONTOV" DIVE IN NEW ZEALAND

by Des Williams

There is no doubt our adventure to dive the "Mikhail Lermontov" in April was an unqualified success.

The sunken ocean liner offers a completely new experience in wreck diving, mainly because it is lying in particularly dirty water. This makes diving very spooky and much more of a challenge.

The best visibility we had was probably no more than 15 feet, so very quickly a gangway or lifeboat davit would loom up out of the gloom and evasive action had to be taken. There were certainly some parts within the ship which presented us with clearer visibility.

One of these was the Bolshoi Lounge where visibility was probably 35 - 40 ft. The ghostly shapes of lounges, tables and bandstand create an unforgettable sight. The thick carpet on the floor was very soft to the touch and the glass swinging doors on the bar at one end of this huge ballroom are now overgrown with algae and anemones.

At the stern of the liner is a large entrance to the Neptune Bar which is in effect a large glass-roofed indoor swimming pool bar. The soft bar stools anchored to the floor indicate the bartenders domain - we are at 90 ft. at this point and our torch lights pierce the murky water to reveal a heap of grog! Everything from the finest Scotch to liqueurs, to beers and stout are piled a couple of meters deep - cigarette cartons are still in place in the racks behind the bar and crockery is all over the place. We swim through this eerieroom, over the railing and find ourselves in the pool! The haunting light penetrating the algae covered glass roof makes the heart thump a little louder; which way is out of here?

This once proud, gleaming white, 20,000 ton ocean liner cruised the Mediterranean and Arctic seas before venturing into the Pacific Ocean. We were able to follow some of her voyages on pencil marked marine navigation charts, which we recovered from the chart room behind the bridge. The Arctic Circle Norwegian coastal fjords and the holiday islands of the Mediterranean were all represented on the charts - this vessel has certainly seen some of the most beautiful natural features of the world.

As the "Lermontov" is lying on her starboard side, on a murky bottom in 120 ft. of water, one must always be careful not to become entangled in wires, cables or even curtains which still hang from cabin windows.

Penetration of this wreck should be undertaken with the greatest care, as silt is soon flying and poor visibility degenerates into a black-out situation. Swimming along inside the portside promenade, we paused to look at the tumbled down heap of electronic video games and Space Invaders machines. The gloomy green light which penetrates the thick algae coated glass produces an entertainment parlour atmosphere. The only thing missing is the beeping and buzzing sounds once generated by these machines.

Inside the bridge we plummet down to 100 ft. and enter the chart room with torches ablaze - the water is clearer in this room. In the torchlight we see the heap of marine navigation charts filed under the large chart table. On the walls are shelves full of navigation reference books - we draw one out and turn the pages, they are all in Russian naturally. On the back wall is a heavy battered door, still clinging to its hinges having resisted rather determined efforts of treasure seekers. The room beyond has the lure of an Egyptian tomb and maybe one day someone will manage to break through the door.

Ascending from the depths of the bridge towards the gloomy daylight we pass many navigational instruments before exiting the doorway onto the conning wing. Then back past the radio room and squeeze through a hole in the locked door to enter a world of various communication equipment and desks. Opening draws we find coins, radio circuit diagram manuals, drawing instruments and piles of spare radio parts. A cigarette lighter with "Baltic Shipping Co." printed on it and some items of clothing. It was here that news of the ship's collision with a reef off Cape Jackson, was radioed to the world. Everywhere, it was obvious that the passengers and crew had to leave quickly.

We return to the salvage vessel "Little Mermaid" above, after another fantastic dive on this sleeping Russian liner. A hot shower and warm clothes, then hot soup and some of "cookys'" delicious food.

Great memories of a great adventure for us all. I remember thinking what a good dive the "Mikhail Lermontov" would be, soon after she sank two years ago; I was right.*

EASTER PARADE (A BICENTENNIAL BASH)

by Don Abell

I am writing this article as I sit on The Little Mermaid, a sturdy twin hull craft, heading to Picton after five unbelievable days of diving and tall story telling on the "Mikhail Lermontov". It makes it very difficult to remember back to Easter, but I will do my best and leave Alex Talay (scribe extraordinaire, Club Treasurer, Safety Officer and patron of slow race horses) to tell you all about our Russian cruise.

I title the article Easter Parade because of the cast of thousands with Jack Namiota taking the role of Fred Astaire and Fiona Bruce the role of Judy Garland (or whatever you like).

A full list of attendees is appropriate to evidence a first class attendance by the Club (not necessarily in order of importance after the first few names):-

Don Abell
Jenny Large
Fiona Bruce
Mick Jackiw
Brendan O'Kane and Pauline
Ross Luxford, Chris, Kerry Lee, Tamara and friend
Barry Truscott, Marie, Sam and Mal (female friend of Sam)
Craig and Katie (Craig's fiance)
Igor Chernichov
Alex Talay
Pat Reynolds
John Lawler
Charlie Brincatt and Martin
Mick Jeacle, Annie, Samantha and Jessie
Bob Scott, June, Barney and Jenny
Tony Tipping, Marg, Marcus and Laura
Martin Taliana, Josie and two children
Andy Mastrowicz, Gale, Nicole and Kim
Peter Mastrowicz and Roxanne
Anthony Finnegan and Debbie
Chris Llewellyn and Rhonda
Jack Namiota

At my count that's fifty people and a top attendance for our usual Easter extravaganza. That will be claimed as a record. Tony Tipping says he can remember when we had a higher attendance, but I have found Tony to be a little less than reliable and to date he has been unable to provide me with a detailed list of more attendees at such an Easter trip. I do require any list provided by Tony to be certified by at least two independent J.P.'s.

To vindicate the top attendance we had first class weather. No rain, sunshine and calm seas. We dived on Friday, Saturday and Sunday for a full day. The first two were good days and some divers thought they were dived out until they woke Sunday to glorious weather and flat seas. Boats were organised and divers appeared from everywhere. 16 divers Friday and 21 divers on each of Saturday and Sunday. It sure is handy to have six available boats compliments of Truscott, Jeacle, Mastrowicz, Scott, Lawler and Luxford. In the word of Mr. Talay, the boats of Scott and Luxford plus three Haines and a brick.

Good diving each day. The first dive for Friday was Skull Rock with visibility at about 40 feet and our old friend the seals playing with us as usual. We can't always get out to Skull so it was good to show this spot to Brendan and Fiona who have not been with us to Tidal River before. We retreated to the coast for lunch and had a second dive looking for crays.

Saturday had a breeze blowing so we dived in the protection of the Glennies. Fiona and I had a dive on some beautiful territory. Surprising because we thought it would be ordinary. Great colour, fish life and overhangs to see. It looked like good cray territory, but not one to be seen. Others dived the same area with similar comments, Bazza saw a thresher shark for the second day in a row. The shark left him alone both times, not convinced that Bazza would constitute a full dinner, or perhaps it was hard to pick Bazza as by this time the old feller was about the same blue colour as the water. Bazza thought that both sharks were about 6 ft. long. Tony Tipping judged the second at between 8 - 15 ft. depending on how the light caught it. This supports my previous comments on Tony's judgement. Unfortunately this tendency to remember the great dive trips of the 1930's with amazing inaccuracy and to exaggerate to immense proportions is not highlighted in the normal dive medical.

The first dive on Sunday was planned at Bum Rock, but a swell made us change to a dive in the lee on the island to the south. This dive was unbelievable. Clear water and some enormous caves and swim throughs. Brendan and I found some beautiful territory at 90 ft. and had to adjust our dive time to make sure we could enjoy it. Mick Jeacle had a top dive and was so revved up he could almost walk on water back to his boat.

We had a visit from a fisheries boat while moored at that spot. There was not much on board to declare and the officers were friendly and helpful. More interested to check that we knew the rules.

That leads to my pet topic of restrictions on divers, who are accused by professional fisherman of harming the cray population. We did probably 70 dives over three days and we caught less than 10 crays - all at the right size. Have a look at the size of the crays next time you are in a seafood restaurant. Some are like oversize prawns, and it is not divers who bring up the illegal size, but the professional fisherman themselves. They don't need divers to ruin their livelihood when they are doing such an effective job of it themselves.

Congratulations to Jenny Large who caught her first cray and proudly took it home to Mick who had been spending Easter fishing with his special .22 tackle.

I noticed that Ross seems to have worked out how to do this cray catching thing. It wasn't long ago that he was longing for his first and now he brought up some good size Decopods at Easter.

No doubt Flotsam & Jetsam will give some appropriate awards this year. I notice that as the diving increases the monstoring decreases. We must be getting older.

I still think that John Lawler should get the Superman Award for the memories he has provided us with from 2 years ago.

Tony Tipping should get some award for his fatherhood capabilities with young Marcus. I had the good fortune of having my tent next to the Tippings and being awoken one morning to the prolonged whinning of young Marcus combined with the tantrum stomping of his little feet. Tony was obviously unable to do anything to control the little unaffected child of nature.

Tony told me later that he does not believe in imposing any discipline because it may affect the child adversely in later years.

I noticed that the same performance did not repeat itself on the following morning. I was simply informed by Marg that she was looking after Marcus and that he always behaved for her. Marg does not have the same concern for little Marcus' later years. Seems to me that he has a 50/50 chance and his odds improve every time Tony does his country trip for a week.

A lot more happened but since most of us were there why go through it all again. We will do it all a bit better next year. Maybe some extra sites to cater for the bigger palaces some members bring nowadays. We will also improve the tank filling system so that there is less freeloading by slack divers who leave the work to the same willing bodies every time.

A last word of congratulations to John Lawler on the performance of his new Haines - "The Happy Hunter". John loves his new toy and he is looking after his fellow members by providing another regular dive boat.

See you next year.*

TIP'S TIT-BITS

by Tony Tipping

Well Donny Abell managed to turn on a terrific Easter trip yet again - over 50 men, women and children remained totally dry and warm (except when diving or drinking) for the entire long weekend. Must have been the biggest turn out and best diving since I last organised a Prom trip back in '82 when we had 55 turn up! I better not get carried away with complimenting Don too much because he's probably given me such a bucketing somewhere else within the covers of this issue of Fathoms.

You see Don knew I'd be arriving at Tidal River mid afternoon Thursday and suggested that I place everyone pretty close together until he arrived next morning and to keep him an area in the quietest part of our sites. I reserved a flat grassy site for him between our tent and the Jeacle mansion and on Friday morning there were no other options as we had about 20 tents, several boats and a few caravans on 10 sites! Now you'd think Don would sleep pretty well after all that gourmet food; seafood platters etc., several cans of his favourite brew and a bottle of claret every night followed by Chris and Rhonda's port but NO he didn't and he had the audacity to blame my dear little Laura for waking him up! You see Laura couldn't sleep because she was kept awake by the constant noise and the stench of the aroma coming from Don's tent about three feet away from her head! You must be more considerate Donald when selecting your choice of seafood and beverages on future trips!

My highlights this Easter were twofold - one in the water, the other on land. Firstly, the Saturday morning dive Bazza and I had between Dannevig and Citadel Islands (or was it Little Glennie?) was spectacular - caves, tunnels, colour, heaps of fish and plenty of different species, great visibility over 60 feet and to top it off an eight foot blue shark that cruised slowly to within about four feet of us then just gently went on its merry way. Maximum depth there, seventy feet but an hour well spent and enjoyed every bit as much as the deeper alternatives.

The other highlight was Chris or Tony's, Johnny O'Keefe tape and in particular the song "She Wears my Ring" because the night it came on Mick Jeacle took control of the mike and I reckon you could have heard him singing across the water to Cape Otway, and surprisingly he got out all those high notes better than J.O.K.!

In order to keep the peace at home I work on the trade off system with Poor Old Maarrgg, i.e. Christmas and Easter trips with V.S.A.G. (always the best two anyway) a week and a long weekend or two at a quiet spot during the year like the Grampians. This Anzac weekend we went to Paynesville on Lake King at the Gippsland Lakes. We hired a caravan and a boat, went out and generally had a quiet bludge - can definitely recommend that spot for a quiet break from work.

That reminds me about Big Mick and his problems diving as a result of the several dives done by the Club on Anzac weekend. I certainly won't rubbish Mick for what happened - apparently he was unlucky or perhaps very lucky for contacting the Alfred Hospital re: suspected "Bends". I won't forget what David Tuxen said about the diver who obeys all the rules and takes all necessary precautions, but even so every one in 200 or so still gets the "Bends". I recently spoke to a doctor who was familiar with Mick's case and he asked me how many V.S.A.G. divers had felt minor symptoms after deep dives, but had never reported them. I known damn well I've been guilty in the past, how about the rest of you? By the way Mick next time we do a 15 minute penetration dive on the 120 foot submarine don't let me wave goodbye and leave you there again (although I must say that time you did the mandatory deco stop!).

1st May provided us with a perfect day for diving, firstly the George Kermode wreck (very close to my heart this one) followed by lunch on Johnny's boat then we dived the reef west of Pyramid Rock. Amanda and I had an exhilarating 40 minutes on the Kermode made particularly interesting by the other 14 or so divers we kept bumping into, then with Johnno retiring after lunch I dived the reef with Jenny and Amanda - not a very good idea at all! I mean they are both excellent divers except they insisted on swimming away from me at 180° apart! My Malaysian friends really appreciated the abs I took home, but did not as much see even a feeler of that other more prized species.

Put your thinking caps on during the next couple of months re: the Committee elections. The problem with V.S.A.G. is that the only decision that's harder to make than getting voted on the Committee is making up your mind when it's time to get off! There are members out there who have got a lot out of this Club - perhaps it's your turn to put something back. Maybe even a bit more female company for Jenny Large wouldn't go astray! *

MIKHAIL LERMONTOV

by Alex Talay

Recently, as most of you are aware, a few of us went on a trip to New Zealand to dive the wreck of the Russian Cruiseship "Mikhail Lermontov". The ship sank at a place called Port Gore which is in the north of the South Island near the Marlborough Sounds. It sank on the night of 16th February, 1986 with the loss of 1 Russian seaman.

Throughout our time there I kept a log and rather than re-write it for the purpose of this article I will reproduce it as it was written at the time.

DAY 1

Arrived Port Gore 4.30. Spectacular landing, beautiful spot. Little Mermaid picked us up. Wreck about 1 mile offshore. Only one house visible on shore rest is bushland and mountainous similar to Wilson's Prom. Little Mermaid is top catamaran very large. Couldn't wait to dive so we all kitted up soon as we got on boat. Dived at 6 o'clock so class as night dive. High water entry from stern about 10 ft. to water and swam under boat to big hawser which is attached to wreck. Very dark and poor visibility. Doug and I went with Graeme Sinclair into bridge and penetrated wreck. Spent $\frac{1}{2}$ hour on ship very cold. Found 2 wine glasses, 1 port glass and a tumbler all in perfect nick. Very hard to orient oneself to where you are. Ship is very big. Everyone rapt in dive. Dave Mercer known as Cookie prepared top meal which we all enjoyed washed down with beer, red wine and Irish coffee. Swapped lies for a couple of hours and hit the sack $\frac{1}{2}$ pissed. Ship very comfortable.

DAY 2

After good breakfast dived about 9 o'clock with Doug and Malcolm Blair owner of Little Mermaid. He took us to the gash in the ship which caused it to sink. Have seen gap that Pilot Jamieson tried to put the Lermontov through. I would worry about putting my boat through it. Suicidal piece of navigation. Hull is peeled back like a banana skin. Watertight doors were left open or unable to close tight because of gear left near them jamming them open. Vis. about 10 ft. then went into ballroom called Bolshoi Room. Examined electronic organ and swam deep inside ship. Swam into bridge area. Swam to bow area and checked out large hatch that Malcolm was interested in, reckon we

can open it. 2nd dive with Graeme and Doug. Went back into Bolshoi. Doug found drum from band. Found library of sorts all Russian books. Good dive. Weather changes very rapidly here. Strong offshore wind this afternoon. Malcolm telling us he has found the wreck of the General Grant. Very interested in this and discussed subject at length. The General Grant it seems is a famous wreck in N.Z. It was carrying gold. It is in the Auckland Islands and went down May 14, 1866. Cargo was wool, nine tons gold and spelter (like pewter). There were 83 people on board, 15 survived actual wreck of these 4 sacrificed their lives in a desperate attempt to reach N.Z. by longboat. The Auckland Islands are about 250 miles from the South Island of N.Z. and are classed as Antarctic Islands. One other died off illness and the 10 survivors were rescued on November 21, 1867 after being marooned for over 18 months of hardship and privation. The manifest showed that 2576 oz of gold was on board but it was stated that there was very much more than that. There was in the cargo a few tons of spelter and it was held by some that a good part of what was entered a spelter was really gold. Among those drowned were a number of gold miners returning to England and carrying large quantities of gold with them. Malcolm has spent considerable time finding this wreck and in fact spent 2 years diving what he thought was the Grant but in fact turned out to be a French ship called the Anjou, which went down in 1905. He then later discovered what he is almost certain is the Grant. He has recovered 64 half crowns of silver so far and will go back when weather permits. Naturally that part of the world allows for diving on very few occasions and is a major expedition every time it is attempted and costs a lot of money. The Grant was a new, full rigged ship of 1,103 tons registered in Boston U.S.A. There are hundreds of wrecks around the N.Z. coast and the locals we have met are really intrepid divers as they cover vast distances in small boats to dive and discover new wreck sites. The gear they get off them is unbelievable but most of them, like the Lermontov, are in very remote areas. It is really wild country.

As stated, Malcolm also discovered the French Barque the "Anjou". She was of 2,069 tons built in 1899. The cliffs that she and the Grant hit are in the same area in the Auckland Islands. These cliffs average 800 to 1,000 ft. high and are sheer to the sea. The cliffs are on the seaward side of the Island and stand in the path of the Roaring Forties. The lee side of the Island gently slopes to the sea and there are many fiords. This extremely cold and inhospitable part of the world must be awesome to see.

DAY 3

3 dives today. Dived with Doug, found Satellite Communications Centre. Recovered charts from chartroom. Vis. better on 1st dive. Swam into covered swimming pool at the stern. Found bar area and got some bottles of grog. Weird feeling did not know was swimming inside pool until saw ladder. Entered a few cabins. Can't complain about food and accommodation it is 1st class.

DAY 4

Doug and I dived with Malcolm. Wild day, big seas and a howling gale. Supposed to have 2 divers join us from Auckland. No hope of them flying in. All light aircraft in N.Z. grounded. Did high water entry from bow, very difficult due to conditions. Went to Duty Free shops, very hairy dive deep inside ship. Doug and I took caving reel. I would not have got out without it. Didn't have a clue where I was. Malcolm does this dive without a line, he really knows his way about.

Not really enough room for 3 in this area. Very heavy penetration dive. On way out went past post office and bought some stamps but no one there so didn't have to pay. Depth in this area is 120 ft. and pitch black. Glad to have line and got out no worries winding around stairs with left and right turns in and out all the way. Doug reeled in. Exciting dive and we are first ones to do it so far. Doug found a reel that someone had dropped on the deck when we were swimming along outside the ship.

Now midday and sea extremely stormy. This boat rides exceptionally well. Wind gusting to 60 knots maybe more. Water being whipped into the air in giant Willy Willies and being driven all over the place. Would not like to be out here in my boat. Weather deteriorating, heavy rain and cannot see shore. On 2nd dive Doug and I went back to entrance of shops but too deep to go further. Found winter garden and went into picture theatre, eerie in there, went to end of winter garden. Very dark and silted up badly. Dead trees in large tubs looked spooky. Had to rise to ceiling to get out as could not see due to silt. Found windows but none broken, followed line of windows till found one broken and got out that way. Pretty hairy dive but got out of water feeling good. Weather forecast is for 70 knot southerlies later tonight. We are clearing the decks and bracing for a rough night.

DAY 5

Howling gale, Hurricane force from the south. Crazy conditions for diving. Have never seen anything like it. Doug lost tank out of holder while doing high water entry from bow. Aborted dive. Dived inside with Doug later and went to Duty Free area again. Missed shops by 10 ft. Doug got tangled up in rope. Freed him but we had to leave. Got central foyer sign in Russian and English as we left. Vis. very bad outside ship, not bad inside. Conditions atrocious for diving. Up top is a haelstorm.

Sat around till midnight having a few drinks and telling lies.

DAY 6

It was decided last night to cancel flight out of Port Gore. Far too rough and windy to take off. Decision made to up anchor at 3 in morning and run to Picton up Queen Charlotte Sound. Drama occured when one engine refused to start. Geoff Williams (who is an electrician) dragged out of bed. Malcolm and Geoff took starter motor off good engine and put on crook one. Still didn't start looks like batteries too run down to fire up. We arranged for plane to pick us up at 9.30 in Picton. No hope of making it. Mal decided to get going on one engine only. Hydraulics not working, have to steer boat manually, very slow going. Wind about 20-25 knots. Rounded Cape Jackson 8.30 and are proceeding up Queen Charlotte Sound. Glen and Cathy, who are 2 of the hardest souls I have come across, are in an 18 ft. Ally boat and have been tossed around for days like corks. Their engine has lost power and we have had to rescue them as we rounded Cape Jackson. Threw Cathy a line as they came alongside and they are presently banging along behind us. This has compounded our problems as Mal has had to reduce speed because our good engine is overheating. Have cancelled flight by radio. Have radioed Picton. Another boat coming out to meet us with spare batteries. Should be interesting transferring. Sound is very beautiful country and we are enjoying this unexpected bonus to our trip. Have transferred batteries and jumper leads. Boys working below. No success, Geoff and engineer that came on board have hooked up 20 batteries to the starter motor. When they hit the switch the jumper leads fly off the deck, there is so much power going through and still the engine won't fire.

This is where I finished my log. In all it took us about 10 hours to get to Picton, and we enjoyed every minute of it. The members of our group were: Graeme Sinclair (organiser of N.Z. end of trip), Malcolm Blair (owner of Little Mermaid), Dave Mercer (cook), Doug Catherall, Des Williams, Geoff Williams, Don Abell, Bob Scott, Max Synon and myself.

The Little Mermaid is a 75 ft., 120 ton catamaran and is extremely comfortable and stable. We were lucky in that we were the only ones on board. It can take 20 people. The New Zealand contingent Graeme, Malcolm and Dave looked after us very well. Every night we would sit around having a few drinks and yarning. Dave is a very good cook and we ate like kings.

It is one of the best trips I have ever been on and I would recommend it to anyone. The Lermontov dive is definitely not for novices as it is cold and very dirty most of the time, but it certainly is exciting.

In closing I would like to thank Des Williams for organising the trip for us.★

Closed Season Extended for Rock Lobster

The opening date of the 1987 fishing season for Southern Rock Lobster in Victoria has been deferred until 16 November.

Dates of the closed season are:

Male: 1 October to 15 November) both days
Female: 1 June to 15 November) inclusive

The Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands, Ms Joan Kirner, said the closed season had been extended with the aim of reducing mortality of breeding female rock lobster, so improving the long term viability of the Victorian fishery.

The extended closed season applies to both commercial and recreational fishermen, with offenders liable for heavy penalties.

From "Recreational Fisheries Newsletter" -
October 1987.

COOK STRAIGHT

MARLBOROUGH
SOUNDS

SHIP STRUCK
HERE

LIGHTHOUSE

CAPE JACKSON

8 MILES

PORT GORE

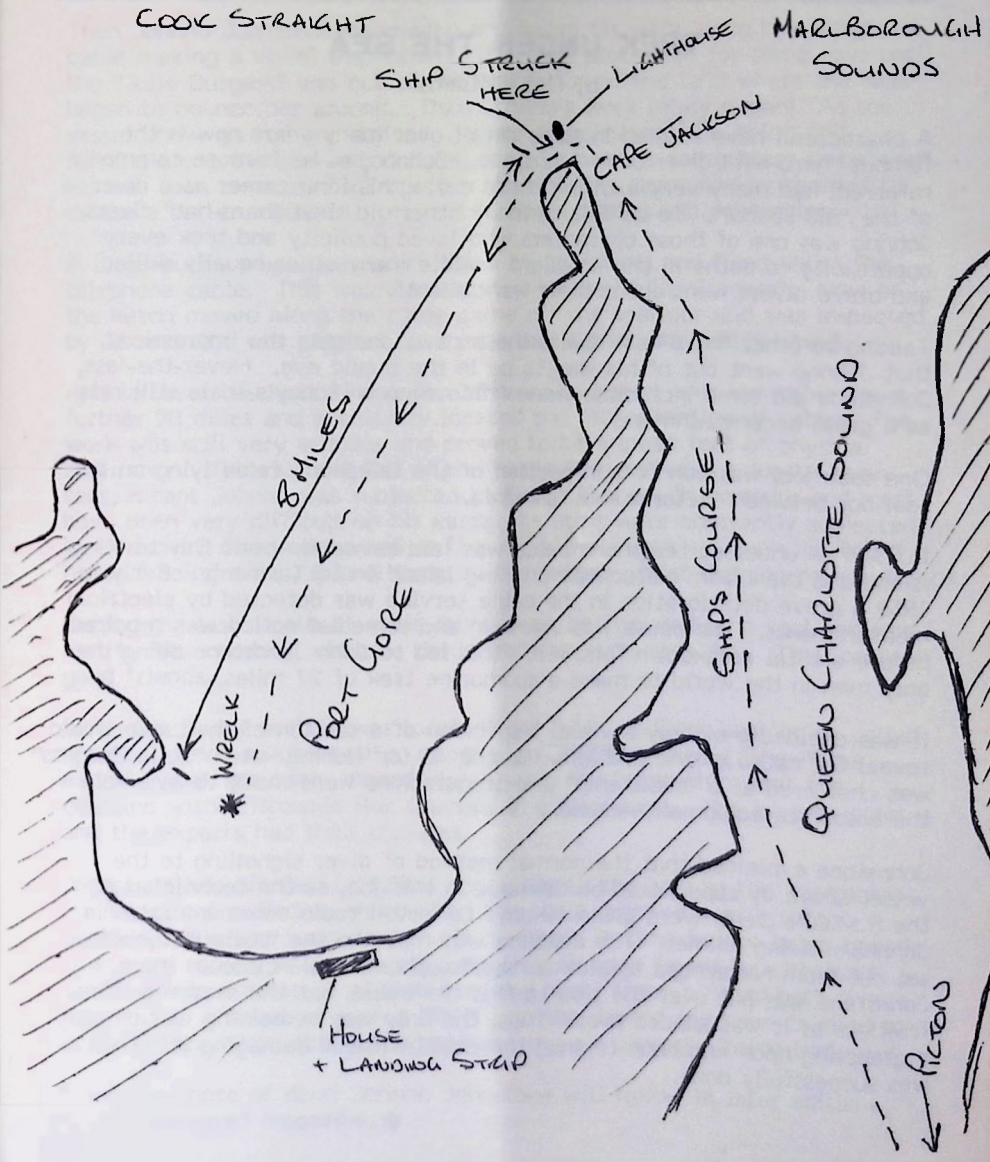
WRECK

SHIPS COURSE

QUEEN CHARLOTTE SOUND

HOUSE
+ LANDMARK STRIP

PICTON



TREK UNDER THE SEA

by Des Williams

A character I have studied in some detail over many years now is the famous "hard-hat" diver John Johnstone. Johnno, as he is more commonly referred, had many very exciting times during his long career as a diver of the "old school". To be fair to many other old time "hard-hat" divers, Johnno was one of those characters who loved publicity and took every opportunity to bathe in the limelight - while many other equally skilled and brave divers went about their work silently.

Talking to other "hard-hat" divers these days, one gets the impression that Johnno went out of his way to be in the public eye. Never-the-less, Johnstone did some incredible work which even on today's scale still rate as a great accomplishment.

One such job, was Johnno's inspection of the telephone cable lying on the seafloor between Victoria and Tasmania.

In 1935 an undersea telephone cable was laid between Apollo Bay to King Island and then from Naracoopa on King Island on to Tasmania. Early in 1939 a grave deterioration in the cable service was detected by electrical measurements. The cause was unknown and remedial action was required before a total breakdown followed. This led to John Johnstone being the only man in the world to make a submarine trek of 27 miles.

It was decided that only a visual inspection of a section of the cable would reveal the cause of the problem. So the 40 ton fishing ketch "Julie Burgess" was chartered as a "cable ship" and preparations were made to assemble the elaborate equipment needed.

Johnstone explained that the normal method of diver signalling to the vessel above by rope would be difficult in this job, so the technician at the P.M.G.'s Dept. were given 10 days to install radio communication in Johnno's diving helmet. The deadline was met and the "Julie Burgess" set out from Naracoopa to pick up the telephone cable close in shore. Johnstone was put over the side to find the cable, but the search proved fruitless as it was sanded over. Thus, the only way remaining was to drag a grappling hook and hope to snag the cable without damaging it. This was successfully done.

Then Johnno Johnstone descended and began his walk along the telephone cable making a visual inspection. The work proceeded for some days until the "Julie Burgess" was out of the protection of the land where the seas began to bounce her around. Then Johnno's work really began! As the vessel above yawed and drifted, Johnno found himself bouncing and running along the sea-bed, dodging rock formations and gutters as he went. He was soon exhausted after a few days of this caper and so decided to devise a better method to prevent further bruising and exhaustion.

A large pulley wheel was taken down by Johnstone and fixed under the telephone cable. This was then secured to the "Julie Burgess". Now as the ketch moved along the cable came off the seafloor and was inspected by Johnno who was perched on a rope seat behind the pulley wheel.

And so, over the next 3½ months Johnno was towed over the cable for a further 20 miles and eventually located the faulty section of cable. The work was still very arduous and proved to be a great feat of physical endurance. The rise and fall of the "Julie Burgess" above due to heavy seas, meant Johnno was subjected to fierce changes in pressure and must have been very difficult on his ears. His arms were constantly subjected to wrenching from above and as the vessel went into a trough, he found himself doing a hop, skip & jump on the seabed whilst dodging rock outcrops.

During the last month of work Johnno was be-friended by a seal and was met by the creature when he descended for work each day. They became good friends.

When the faulty section was located, the P.M.G.'s Dept. was again called upon to invent an underwater camera, so Johnstone could "show" the experts what the cable looked like. Again the technicians met the deadline with a Brownie Box Camera in a glass case. The job was done and the experts had their pictures.

Johnstone had planned to follow the cable all the way to the Tasmanian mainland, but pulled up short when the cable dropped over a steep declivity. He was lucky to get off his perch in time before being towed downward rapidly where his air supply would have failed to withstand the stupendous pressure of water around him. Many a "hard-hat" diver has died as a result of such a "fall" into the depths and been crushed to death before being able to compensate the air pressure inside their suit.

* Maybe more of diver Johnno Johnstone will follow in later editions of "Fathoms" magazine. *

DECO STOPS

by Alex Talay

- * A recent decision handed out by the Victorian Underwater Football League Tribunal has thrown the Downlow Medal count wide open. Club Captain and No. 1 Ruckman, Mick Jeacle received a 4 week suspension in a harsh verdict issued by Tribunal Chairman, Dr. David Tuxen. In a hard fought game between V.S.A.G. and Sorrento played in the "Heads" area. Mick was found guilty of striking with a bent elbow and playing on after the siren had sounded.

In handing down his decision Tuxen said:-

Quote "We have viewed the videotape and it is evident that the player concerned did bend his elbow and strike his opponent a hard blow to the head area. His excuse that he was only going for the ball which was wedged inside a ledge 100 ft. down does not hold water with us. Also his refusal to stop playing when having, retrieved the ball after the siren had sounded was a flagrant breach of the rules and cannot be tolerated. We find player Jeacle guilty and suggest that he use his 4 weeks leisure time to study the rule book. A repeat of this offence will see you suffer a much harsher penalty." Unquote.

A tight lipped Jeacle stormed from the Chamber and barged his way to the lift through a waiting throng of media representatives. When asked his reaction to his ineligibility for the Downlow he muttered a few obscenities and left via the back door.

- * Won't be seeing much of Club quack Fiona Bruce for a while. She has been posted up to Mt. Beauty in the snowfields for 4 months. They tell me there's plenty of action at night so no doubt the experience she has gained as resident sawbones at the V.D. clinic will come in very handy.
- * Club trip at Christmas is to Streaky Bay in South Australia. Rob McLaughlin will be looking after us again. Powered sites are \$45.00 per week. Dives will be \$25.00 per day. Diving at Streaky Bay is reputed to be amongst the best in Australia. I am the Dive Captain so if you are interested give me a call.

- * Club effort to sell wine has been an outstanding success. Over 200 dozen has been sold already. At \$12.00 profit per dozen this represents a healthy figure for our bank balance. Congrats to Mick Jeacle and Don Abell for pushing this effort.*



WRECKERS & SMUGGLERS by Jack Loney

A lecture by well known prolific shipwreck author and raconteur Jack Loney has been arranged for our V.S.A.G. meeting in May 1989. Yes, that's right, 1989! we had hoped to have Jack speak to us at our June 1988 meeting, but were unable to book him due to his huge schedule.

It seems the Bicentennial Year has been Jack's busiest ever, with 54 lecture bookings between May and December 1988 alone!

We shall look forward to hearing him in May 1989. Believe me, it is worth the wait.

ELIZA RAMSDEN

by Don Abell

Total astonishment is the only way I could describe my reaction to the number of telephone calls I received on the night of May 14.

I would have thought by now that everyone in the Club would realise that V.S.A.G. will never go down on old Eliza on a day that I am scheduled to dive. The fact that 20 members were willing to leap out of bed and drive to Sorrento at 9.30 a.m. on a Sunday for no reason at all leaves one guessing. Was it pure optimism or is there a secret move in the Club to give me this false sense of hope that maybe one day I will see this wreck that everyone tells me is not worth the trouble:- and it is a trouble.

This is something like Des Williams and the V.S.A.G. Easter trip. The year that Des puts his name down to join us at Easter all members pack their raincoats, wellington boots and umbrellas and leave their dive gear at home. One club spirited member even suggested that he would be pleased to pay twice the normal site fee at Easter if we used the extra money to send Des interstate for the religious festival.

Well to cut a long story short the wind was blowing 25 knots from the north moving west. We did not bother to launch.

However the B.B.Q. breakfast was good fun. Great to get more time to talk to the club members who actively like to dive. Credits to those who made the effort:-

Don Abell - your Captain for the day.
John Goulding - with luxury dive cruiser.
Jack Namiota - speaking.
Ross Luxford - our market gardener.
John Lawler - with the Happy Hunter.
Paul Sier - must have thought it was Australia Day.
Fiona Bruce - not into B.B.Q.'s - prefers the kiosk.
Amanda Tutton - came back to dive and didn't.
Charlie Brincatt - didn't have to tow someone else's boat this time.
Alex Talay - a liking for "little boys".
Pat Reynolds - decky extraordinaire.
Igor Chernichov - our Siberian Husky.

Chris Bourier - recently "paid up" member.
Des Williams - we invite him so he will bring his brother.
Geoff Williams - not a member, but we invite him to fix the boat engines.
Peter Jones - came with his close friend Doug.
Doug Catherall - came with his very special friend Peter.
Russell Olerenshaw - now has a boat and a wet suit.

Also mention to the Jeacles - Mick, Annie, Samantha and Jessie who dropped in for breakfast with the stars.*

CHRISTMAS TRIP 1988

This Christmas the Club will be going to Streaky Bay in South Australia. This fabulous diving location largely unknown to Victorian divers is located on the Great Australian Bight and is about the same distance from Melbourne as Port Lincoln.

Powered camp sites are now available at a rate of \$45.00 p.w. for 2 adults. Additional people on each site are \$10.00 each per week. Children under 5 are free.

A dive operator will provide a boat and air filling facilities are available.

Please register your names with Alex Talay - 772 3085 as soon as possible.