

# FATHOMS

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EST. 1954



**INDEPENDENT  
DIVING  
FREEDOM**

Safety in Diving

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GPO Melbourne 3001*



# VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

# VSAG

Victorian Sub-Aqua Group, Box 2526W, G.P.O., Melbourne. 3001 Australia

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## FATHOMS

EST. 1984



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DIVING  
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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 16th February 8.00 p.m.  
Thursday 16th March  
North Melbourne Football Club,  
Fogarty Street, North Melbourne.

### Next committee meetings

21st February, P. Reynolds.  
21st March, A. Talay.

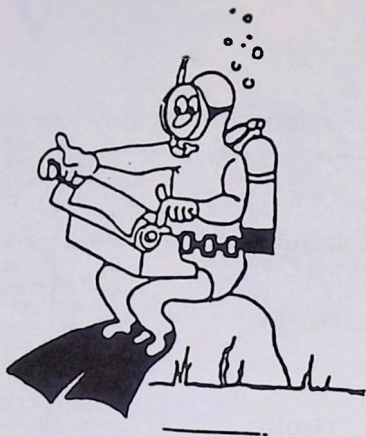
Editorial submissions to: "The Editor" Fathoms C/- 13 BIRDWOOD STREET,  
BOX HILL SOUTH, VIC. 3128  
TELEPHONE: 890 6634

## EDITORIAL

It seems that V.S.A.G. Christmas trips just keep getting better and better.

Remember a few years ago how we use to rave about Jervis Bay and the "fabulous" Arch and the "awesome" Stony Creek "drop-off".

Then along came Byron Bay with its Julian Rocks and Shark infested Pinnacles. Port Lincoln then seemed the place to go with wrecks and portholes. But by all accounts Streaky Bay in South Australia tops the lot.



There's plenty to read about it in this issue and Des Williams will be giving a slide presentation at the February General Meeting to more explicitly demonstrate the magnificence of this location. Congratulations Alex on your choice and many thanks for organizing such a memorable trip.

No thanks though to the Shire of Flinders who allowed visitors to the beach of the same name to endure a most unpleasant environment as we witnessed on the 2nd January.

Not only was it damn near impossible to get boats launched across the piles of foul smelling rotting seaweed, it was impossible to retrieve them without a four wheel drive vehicle.

It's high time the Flinders Shire committed some funds to a concrete ramp. I for one will not be in any hurry to go back there and although the mess we found it in may not happen very often, it shouldn't happen at all if the Shire cared a little about the residents, and visitors who use this location to launch boats.

1989 promises to be another good year for V.S.A.G. We have some excellent dives coming up over the remainder of Summer and Autumn, with Port Campbell and Wilsons Promontory on the calendar for the Labour Day Weekend and Easter. Alex is planning another trip to the Solomons in August and Don is underway with plans for a return trip to the Mikhail Lermontov in New Zealand.

The Club funds are in good shape and the membership numbers are strong so - make the most of it.

The recent spate of problems experienced by some overseas airlines recently with faulty wiring on their aircraft raises the question of the quality of workmanship.

I recently had 2 experiences which left a bad taste in my mouth.

After having my car panel beaten when an 18 tonne tram ran into the back of it, I noticed the tow bar seemed a bit loose. On checking I found that all 6 nuts were loose. That was easy I fixed that, but the tow bar was still loose. So I took the car back to the panel beater who exclaimed - "Oh shit - we haven't welded the floor back together"!

The second incident occurred after I had had my regulator serviced by a reputable dive business. On my first dive I noticed that I was getting a lot of water through the regulator, and before I could change over to my octopus, the second stage fell to pieces 30 feet under the water!! So much for workmanship!

Congratulations to Jeanette and Mick Large on the birth of their daughter last month. At last report, mother and daughter were doing well, and Mick was nowhere near recovering.

Editor

## CHRISTMAS TRIP TO STREAKY BAY, S.A.

by Des Williams

It is hard to know where to start when reporting on the V.S.A.G. Christmas trip to Streaky Bay in South Australia. Being used to the same dive sites around Melbourne which we regularly visit and the congestion on the waterways in Victoria, it was a pleasure to be the only divers at any of the sites within a short trip of the township.

Picture a hard, desert type landscape and bone dry white powder dirt roads leading to many virgin dive sites on the Great Australian Bight. The four wheel-drives shift into low range through the salt bush verge onto the beach. Rob McLachlan's vehicle, towing the 22 foot aluminium dive boat and Neil Medhurst's Toyota towing a trailer full of tanks and dive gear. It is 9.00 a.m. and the shimmering heat of mid day is not far away.

The boat is launched right off the beach and we work like black ants loading dive gear. Soon we are travelling smoothly over the clear waters to the headland known simply as "Highcliff", only 1½ kms. away. Soon the sounder is reporting gullies and crevices of limestone beneath us as we cruise past the ancient formations known as the "Dreadnoughts" off the headland. The cliffs remind us of the Port Campbell district in Victoria.

A school of dolphin tumble by only 200 metres from our boat and we race to put on our gear so we can join them. Visibility is about 60 feet and we descend through showers of bubbles from other miniature divers far below us.

Soon we are joined by schools of inquisitive fishes - leatherjackets nibble at my mask, large sweep cruise in close whilst silver drummer and boarfish (the biggest I have ever seen!!) keep at armslength. Alex Talay in front of me drops down deep into a limestone chasm only 6 feet wide. We swim along the floor of the chasm looking in and under the honey-combed walls at crayfish and beautiful marine flora. Fingers of limestone beetle above us as we penetrate caves and pause in a beautiful grotto big enough for six divers. I was flat out with my camera trying to capture the scenery as fish swam about us.

Towards the end of the dive we were joined by two very large blue groper who cruised in very close to eyeball us and maybe get some free abalone. Unfortunately, abs were very hard to find at that very moment and we were unable to keep them around for very long. They vanished like two rail carriages into the blue fog of ocean.

Alex then led us back to the anchor line and we ascended to be greeted by our mate Rob McLachlan in the boat. There is no doubt about it, Rob certainly knows the spots and isn't afraid to launch via a bush trek. We all owe him a special thank you for his skill, local knowledge and friendship.

All of our dives were memorable ones at Streaky Bay. The underwater geology varied from limestone caves and formations to huge granite boulders, both of which make dives very exciting and full of surprises. No boring sand patches or barren reefs in our visits below.

We had perfect weather throughout and dived brilliant places such as Olive Is., Cape Blanche and Sceale Bay.

Be sure to be at our February meeting to see my slide presentation of our underwater adventures in Streaky Bay and hear all about it. Thanks for a great holiday, Alex!\*

## DIVE VICTORIA

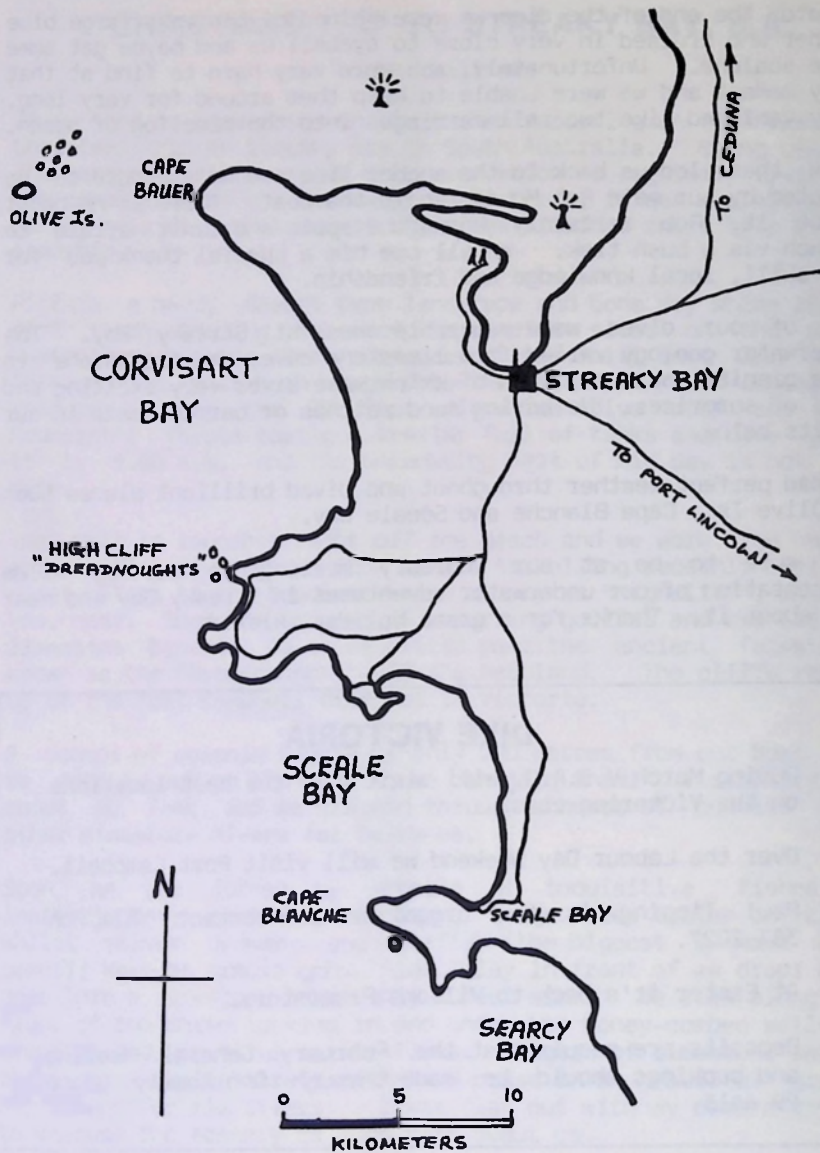
During March V.S.A.G. will visit 2 of the best locations on the Victorian coast.

Over the Labour Day Weekend we will visit Port Campbell.

Paul Tipping is the organizer so contact him on 387 2027.

At Easter it's back to Wilsons Promontory.

Deposits are required at the February General Meeting and bookings should be made through Don Abell, phone 29 4415.





## LOOKING FOR THE NEW YEAR FEELERS

by Don Abell

The Committee scheduled a dive for Monday, January 2nd on the basis that all good V.S.A.G. members would have fully recovered from that Saturday night New Year's Eve party. Unfortunately when I agreed to the dive and to be Dive Captain I had not anticipated my New Year's party in Frankston. I had hardly recovered by the Monday and as I write this on the following Wednesday my wife has yet to fully recover.

Nevertheless the dive must go on and so it did. Four boats hit the water to ferry myself, Mick, Wing Commander Goulding, Tony John (no need for apologies Tip), Sleeping Jack, our man in rubber Bob Scott, Tony Rossi cum Jenny, the lovely Miss Tutton and of course we all remember Jim what's-his-name.

Monday morning was beautiful, calm seas, light easterly, sun shining etc. A number of people congratulated me on the weather but it should not be necessary. I always believe that if the Dive Captain puts in that little bit of extra effort everything will work out well.

Unfortunately my arrangements did not include a call to the Flinders Shire Council advising that we required the beach to be cleared of kelp. We had the worst conditions of kelp that I can remember and the boat launching and retrieving was almost impossible. Luckily a good samaritan with a four wheel drive helped by retrieving all boats.

This did put a dampener on the day, but we launched at Flinders quite often and we really only have this problem once a year.

All four boats went direct to Cape Schank. Around the point the conditions were even better, as we were protected from the easterly. We don't often make the Schank and it's worth it when we get there.

Mick, Tony and I managed 3 dives each. All were in good conditions with plenty of fish life and a few stingrays. I saw a number of good crays but alas they can easily get out of my arm reach. Mick did better by bagging 3. I understand Amanda got her first and it was not a bad size either. Now she's got the knack it will be one more we have to fight off in the ledges.

As a responsible Dive Captain it was necessary to check Tony Rossi's progress. "How many dives so far Tony?" "Two". "How many to go?" "Two". "How many tanks did you bring out?" "Four". Will it be that Tony will chase the Downlow in 1989.

Mick had some problem with his steering and John with his fuel flow, but not as much as the yacht that let off a flare on the horizon. Well to prove the system works there were two choppers overhead in about 10 minutes. Give me some confidence in the system.

You've heard the problems with retrieving boats, but it would be remiss if I did not give due recognition to our own Scotty. We all stuffed about for half an hour while Bob tried to work out where he had left his car key. Where else? The most obvious place. Where everybody else leaves their keys - under the bonnet. To avoid embarrassing Bob further I should not mention that June was sitting on the beach all day and could have held them. There must be some award for an effort like that.

Well if not for the beach a top day. I'll dive Cape Schank any time we can get there.\*

## TRAILER REGISTRATION

The following correspondence relates to the registration of boat trailers and is presented courtesy of Ross Luxford.

From my reading of the Requirements it would appear that all boat trailers irrespective of date of manufacture will be required to carry a data plate indicating gross trailer mass, recommended type size and pressure.

We will try to seek clarification and advise in the next issue.



## **BOATING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA LIMITED**

1st Floor, 882 St Kilda Road, Melbourne 3004. Telephone: (03) 528 1483, 81 3777. Fax: (03) 81 9448

**MEMORANDUM TO:** TRAILER MANUFACTURERS, RETAILERS, AND  
OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

**DATE:** 6TH JANUARY 1989

**SUBJECT:** STANDARDS FOR REGISTRATION INTRODUCED  
FOR LIGHT TRAILERS ON 1ST JULY 1988.

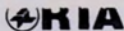
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Attached is a letter from the Road Traffic Authority in reply to our request for an extension of the "moratorium" to enable the industry to understand the new requirements for the registration of trailers.

An extension has been granted till the 30th June 1989, (details and conditions of which are attached) when trailers manufactured after that date will comply fully with the new requirements.

Jim Holmes  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

enc.



23 DEC 1988

Contact: C Ackerman  
Our Reference: 74/DD  
Your Reference: 1263/GC/2  
Date: 17 DEC 1988

Corner Lygon and Princes Streets  
Carlton Victoria

Address mail to:  
Road Traffic Authority  
PO Box 119  
Carlton South Victoria 3053

Telephone (03) 345 4444  
Fax: 345 4121

Mr J Holmes  
Executive Director  
Boating Industry Association  
of Victoria Limited  
1st Floor  
582 St Kilda Road  
MELBOURNE VIC 3004

Dear Mr Holmes

I refer to your letter of 14 November seeking extension of the period of the relaxation of the Standards for Registration introduced for light trailers on 1 July 1988.

Registration Officers have been instructed to permit a relaxation of the requirements under the conditional registration provisions of section 9 (3) of the Road Safety Act 1986. Details of this arrangement are attached.

It is expected that trailer manufacturer will have resolved their difficulties with the 3rd Edition Australian Design Rules, which are the relevant Standards for Registration, by 30 June 1989 and that trailers manufactured after that date will comply fully with the requirements.

Yours faithfully

C Ackerman  
Principal Engineer  
Vehicle Standards

Attach.

CA:sn 9(4)



## TRAILERS LESS THAN 4.5 TONNES GVM

### APPLICATION OF 3RD EDITION AUSTRALIAN DESIGN RULE REQUIREMENTS

It has been decided that trailers manufactured after 1 July 1988 and before 30 June 1989 which do not comply with the requirements indicated below may be registered subject to the conditions also indicated.

for trailers which do not have the required data plate:-



rated gross trailer mass, recommended tyre size and recommended tyre pressure must be displayed on the trailer in a durable form (e.g. painted or stamped etc. onto protected parts of the trailer body or onto a board or plate securely attached).



for trailers with a laden mass exceeding 750kg with no brakes, or multi-axle trailers without brakes on all wheels:-



the trailers are limited in speed to 90 kph, with the words "Max. speed 90 km/h" displayed on the trailer in a durable easily read form.

(Note: Any trailer with a tare mass of 510kg must be fitted with brakes which operate on at least both wheels of any one axle of the trailer).

for multi-axle trailers without load sharing suspension:-

the sum of the rated load capacity of all tyres fitted must exceed the rated gross trailer mass by at least 20%.

for trailers which do not meet all of the lighting requirements:-

must comply fully with the presence, location and colour requirements for Rear Position (Tail) Lamps, Stop Lamps, Registration Plate Lamp and Direction Indicator (Turn Signal) Lamps.

End Outline (Clearance) Lamps and Side Marker Lamps need only meet the presence, transverse location and colour requirements; the requirements for Front Position (Side) Lamps may be waived.

for trailers which do not have safety chain manufactured to the Australian or British Standards:-

may have any other heavy duty chain of at least the specified size.

(Note: although a single safety chain of the specified size may be fitted to a trailer this practice should be strongly discouraged, particularly for trailers with a laden mass exceeding 750Kg;

It is recommended that two safety chains of the specified size are fitted to all trailers).

## CLUBMAN OF THE YEAR

### ALEX TALAY

Congratulations to Alex Talay on winning V.S.A.G. Clubman of the Year for 1988.

With a score of 755 points, Alex had a clear victory over John Lawler at 640 points and Mick Jeacle on 595 points.

It is usual that the Clubman of the Year Award does not just go to the member who has done the most dives. Normally the winner has done a lot of diving, but also has been a regular contributor to Fathoms with stories and articles, and attended most of the social activities.

Alex has certainly been involved in all these ways and in many other behind the scene activities where there are no points to be won.

So congratulations Alex - a true Clubman of the Year in all respects.\*

## FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING

SLIDE PRESENTATION OF  
V.S.A.G. TRIP  
TO  
STREAKY BAY

Don't miss out on seeing some great photographs of the Club's fantastic trip to Streaky Bay.

Acclaimed by those who went as the best diving in Australia.

Thursday, February 16th at 8.00 p.m., North Melbourne Football Club.

## TIP'S TIT-BITS

by Tony Tipping

Sorry it's been so long since this nonsense has appeared in Fathoms - there are plenty of excuses: house extension, arrival of dear little Emma Maaarrggg, extra work commitments, study and the main reason - I'm basically lazy! Bazza will rave about the house extension (if he doesn't he won't get paid!). It's going to be that good I'm going to open up to the public as a display home on weekends recommending all the V.S.A.G. tradesmen who contributed and charge a small fee of course - it seems to be the thing to do in this Club, make a bit of extra cash on the side! In any case there are plenty of ways we can satisfy that thirst for an extra buck, aren't there fellas?

The Christmas trip was pretty good - well for keen divers like myself. In my opinion I don't think Streaky Bay was an ideal spot for non diving wives and little kids because there was nothing much to see or do apart from the diving - it was also very dry and dusty. However the diving probably made up for it; fifty foot visibility, caves, drop-offs, big fish, spectacular cliffs and even the odd feed of cray and abalone.

The trip over on Boxing Day was disastrous for me. Firstly, my paying passenger withdrew on medical advice. Then Des said it was going to be pretty boring but an easy drive especially after Adelaide, but nothing could be more boring than the arse end of Johnny Lawler's boat. There I was alone in the new white Falcon sitting behind the blue Haines for two days. I didn't even get to see much of the flat and uninteresting terrain until my return trip. The only highlight of the trip over was the blue Des, John and I had with the drongos at the Chinese Restaurant after they sat us down for over an hour and served all the locals and left us for dead - did we give them a severe dressing down when we walked out opting for the fish and chips shop! And gee, those two can horse and cart - I shared a motel room with them and couldn't sleep a wink!

At this stage I was going to tell you all the ins and outs of the boys who temporarily took South Australian wives but because I was in the next tent I'd rather not think about it - in fact it upset me more than anything else this Christmas!

Let's tell you about my old mate Alex instead. Funny bloke Alex - my biggest laugh all holiday had to be seeing Alex's Jag as filthy as buggery parked across the rocks at Smooth Pools (where Sam Truscott and I were the only two strong enough on New Years Day to go snorkelling) - it was the sort of place where you drove 30 kms. over a corrugated road (ask Des how his sump is) then down a rough beach track suitable only for four wheel drive vehicles and company cars. Thanks, too Alex for the shampoo - we were up at the showers on New Years Eve and I had forgotten my shampoo so Alex suggested I bend down and pick his up - the only reason I was game was because he'd told me he'd had a good lead up to Christmas and I was assured he came away with empty saddle bags!

Speaking of New Years Eve thanks to John Lawler for buying that expensive plonk at the pub (I was broke at that stage - remember I didn't have a paying passenger) and Andy and Gail for providing the late night venue in the caravan. Andy may not realize this, in fact he's the only person I've ever heard snore "Auld Lang Syne" in tune! Other thank you's must go to the Luxfords, Truscotts, Williams and Lawler for letting me scrounge meals or beer snacks!

After eight days I was missing the family so much that I shot through one night and arrived home the next afternoon only to have Alex telephone me a week later to tell me I missed all the best dives. I do regret missing a crack at Cape Bauer with its 300 foot high cliffs.

See you all on the Pinnacle later this month and Tidal River at Easter.\*



## V.S.A.G. SOCIAL NIGHT AND THE "DOWNLOW" PRESENTATION 1988

The "Downlow" award will be the main feature of this fun social night. The "Downlow" has been hotly contested during 1988 - who will be the winner???

DON'T MISS THIS MAJOR SOCIAL EVENT

### BOOK NOW

The Place: Stavros Greek Tavern,  
183 Victoria Avenue, Albert Park.  
Telephone: 699 5618

The Time: 7.30 p.m.

The Date: Saturday 25th February

The Cost: \$27.00 per head

Licence: B.Y.O.

Stavros Tavern has a great reputation for good Greek food and a fabulous atmosphere.

We will be joined by members of Marine Diving Group and Melbourne Bottom Scratchers on the night as these two clubs are our competitors in the Downlow Race.

Don't delay for this great night of good food, music and dancing.

BOOK NOW!! RING JOHN LAWLER ON 569 9851

## MEDIA WATCH

SUN FEATURES

# Big Ben strikes terror the sea under the sea



Looking his leg on the beach, he's a whole picture of the scene. He's not a professional, but he's not a professional either. He's a professional and takes pictures.

IRONICALLY, Henri Bourcs, one of Victoria's top scuba divers, refused to go spearfishing because he disliked killing fish.

On November 29, 1964, he and a group of friends were spending a leisurely day diving from a fishing boat off Port Fairy.

Just a few seconds for the fun to turn into a scene from a horror movie.

PETER COSTEN was one of the group of friends on the boat with Bourcs.

Here in the second section of our three-part series on shark attacks, he recounts what happened.

IN THE '60s, scuba diving

was awesomely adver-

tised. We were all young and

there were girls and good

times.

Henri Bourcs and I, Irvin

can were often to-

gether.

Irvin drove a two-one

brown Porsche. I had what

was called a "Porsche" and

was a co-responder

at the time.

fed hugely on the seal canby  
was awesomely advertised. We  
were all young and there were  
girls and good times. Henri  
Bourcs and I, Irvin can were  
often together. Irvin drove a  
two-one brown Porsche. I had  
what was called a "Porsche" and  
was a co-responder at the time.

Big Ben was said to have  
the scars of fishing boat  
keels across his back when  
in horror at his great dorsal  
fin.

He ...



LEFT: Bourcs ... took a good look at and used them.



# Divers given no warning of computer risks, says Navy

Officials of the United Kingdom's biggest underwater club are promoting computers for divers that some experts have condemned as potentially dangerous, and which could lead to divers getting decompression sickness, or "the bends".

Two senior officials of the 35,000 strong British Sub-Aqua Club have financial links with a company that distributes one brand of the computers that have been condemned as potentially unsafe by Royal Navy diving experts.

They say they may be contributing to a rise in the number of divers suffering the bends.

The wrist-worn computers are designed to tell divers how long they can stay under water and indicate how long they need to stop while ascending to avoid the bends.

The conventional method is for divers to use a printed table supplied by the club.

The Institute for Naval Medicine in Gosport, Hampshire, says that the cases of decompression sickness it has dealt with have doubled in the past year, during which time the

computers have become popular.

It says the software may be based on unsafe data, that it does not take into account such factors as age, fitness, sex and sterility, and therefore gives divers a false sense of security.

The institute's head of underwater medicine, Captain Ramsey Pearson, said 34 of the 80 cases of decompression sickness dealt with at the Institute this year involved the use of computers.

At the Brighton branch two divers using computers have suffered the bends.

In August, the Brighton

branch wrote to senior club officials and asked why no warning about the potential dangers of computers had been issued by national headquarters.

But the chairman of the Sub-Aqua Club claimed there was no evidence of any problem with the computers saying the data on which it was based was "tried and tested".

But Mr Holbrook did not say that he was a diving consultant for Sphero-Technique (UK) Ltd, one of two Importers and Distributors of the Swiss-made Alpin computer in the UK.

The Sunday Times

# Divers in search for midget sub

DIVERS using sophisticated tracking equipment yesterday went to the bottom of Sydney Harbor in search of a World War 2 Japanese midget submarine.

The divers, taking part in Operation Ko-Mark, also are carrying out the first geophysical survey of the harbor floor.

Naval historian and project co-ordinator, Steven Carruthers, said they hoped to unravel the mystery of one of three midget submarines that entered Sydney Harbor.

Two were destroyed before reaching their targets, but the third succeeded in firing its two torpedoes at the USS Chicago, he said.

Narrowly missing the US heavy cruiser, one torpedo struck the ferry HMAS Kuttabul, killing 21 naval ratings.

The midget submarine slipped away and has not been seen since.

Mr Carruthers, who wrote a book on the attack, believes the submarine lies in the harbor or within a short distance of Sydney Heads.

And after two years' planning, with a budget of

\$161,000 and the use of a sophisticated magnetometer and sidescan sonar equipment, Mr Carruthers said they were hopeful of success.

"It's been on the sea bottom for 46 years, but we expect it will be virtually intact and still, in fact, become a time capsule," he said.

# Sandbag strategy to save shipwreck

SCUBA divers equipped with sandbags are saving one of Victoria's most important shipwrecks, the William Salthouse, from disintegration.

The volunteer divers from scuba groups are carting 30 kg sandbags around the Port Phillip Bay seabed and building walls around the wreck.

The Victorian Archaeological Survey commissioned West Australian maritime archaeologist Mr Kevin Hostie to lead the project.

Mr Hostie said bad weather and mechanical trouble with the main

work boat had delayed work. "But the sandbagging plan has so far been a success," he said.

"It seems to have stopped the worst of the deterioration and we now believe it's possible to save the wreck."

The divers have built four underwater sandbag walls around the weakest sections of the hull — three on the port bow and one on the starboard stern quarter.

The divers expect to complete the task on Wednesday.

The walls should deflect the tidal currents and save the wreck from natural destruction.

A spokesman for the divers said yesterday the wreck, which lies in 12 metres of water off Queenscliff, had fallen victim to wood-boring teredo worms and tidal scour.

He said it had deteriorated so much that maritime archaeologists feared its hull would collapse and its historic cargo would be washed out to sea.

"The cargo include sealed meats, barrels of flour, crates of wine and champagne, iron nails and timbers, which have lain perfectly preserved within the sand-packed hull for almost a century and a half," he said.

"Attacks from teredo

worms earlier this year weakened the hull and left the cargo at risk from the tidal currents which sweep around them."

He said the wreck and its cargo had much to teach Victorians about their maritime heritage and colonial past.

"That's why no effort has been spared to ensure its survival," he said.

The William Salthouse was the first merchant vessel to make a direct trading voyage between Canada and Australia.

It sank in Port Phillip Bay in 1841 and since 1983 has been under the protection of the Victorian Historic Shipwreck Act.

## BOAT NEWS

# Boatie runs radio risk

A salesman's error might have cost a boat owner and a Marine Dealer a hefty fine and possible jail sentences.

The error occurred because the salesman wrongly told a boat owner he would not need a licence to operate a marine radio that he bought.

The owner of **THE BOAT SHOP** confirmed the slip might have occurred and that it was potentially costly.

The boat owner, **James**, could have faced a fine of \$2000 and or a jail term of up to 12 months after fitting the radio to his boat.

**THE DEALER** admitted that he might also face a similar fine and jail sentence if the Department of Transport and Communications recommends a prosecution.

**THE BOAT SHOP** is buying a 27

Mhz marine radio recently. He has fitted the equipment to his new five-metre yacht, a trailer-sailer.

The safety-conscious new yachtsman, a teacher for 16 years, also bought paddles, flares and an anchor.

"I emphasize I am very much a boating novice," **James** said.

"I went to **THE DEALER** to inquire about radios, from the point of view of having one as a safety measure.

"I asked a salesman if there was anything I would need to operate a radio, such as a licence. He said I would not need a licence.

"He advised me to contact the Coast Guard, that they would give me a run-through on how to operate it. He also said there was a brief description in the

instruction book with the radio on how to operate it, including information about its four channels."

The radio cost \$135 and, with an extension cable and aerial, the bill was close to \$200.

Only after fitting the radio to his boat has he learnt he can be fined and jailed for a maximum 12 months simply because he owns the radio and has no licence to operate it.

The licence, a Class B, will cost \$37 a year as from 1 December. "My budget is very tight and if I had known I would have been up for \$37 a year in licence fees I wouldn't have bought it.

"I have drilled holes and everything in the hull, put the aerial on, glued the cable in and thrown the box away, so I am stuck with it."

Since buying the radio, **James** has gained a licence

## Marine retail outlet owners may be prosecuted

The assistant State manager, licensing, for the Department of Transport and Communications,

says that anyone buying a 27 Mhz marine radio must have a licence.

"A person buying such a radio without a licence can be fined \$2000 and or be jailed for 12 months," he said. "The courts may also confiscate the unit."

The department would investigate any incidents where a marine equipment store told a customer

no licence is needed for such a unit.

"The marine shop owner can be charged under the Crimes Act for aiding and abetting an offence that is assuming that the buyer uses the radio," he said.

"The penalty would be similar to that of operating a radio without a licence. The department would investigate the case and prepare a brief for the director of public prosecutions."

"When an employee of a company tells a customer no licence is needed for a marine radio, tells the unit and it is fitted to a boat two things occur.

"The employee is deemed to have acted on behalf of the owner, who can face prosecution, and the fitted radio is seen to be operative, meaning the person who bought it can be prosecuted if he doesn't hold a marine radio licence.

"It is not legal to own a marine radio without a licence and store it in a shed or something, but it is illegal to not have a licence and fit the unit to a boat."

A Transport and Communications Department licensing clerk,

said that a person buying a 27 Mhz marine radio did not have to take lessons to operate the equipment, however if the buyer put the unit in his car, he had to pay a licence fee.

## \$20M SAN REMO MARINA APPROVAL WITHIN REACH

The Shire of Bass is close to approving for a \$20 million marina at San Remo.

The Shire Clerk, Mr Gordon Hatfield, said that after eight years, approval for the marina was within reach.

Establishment of the amendment to the council's planning scheme together with the Department of Planning and Environment's environment effects study closed

recently.

"A panel from the Planning and Environment Department will begin hearing submissions from the public concerning the council's planning scheme that makes provision for the marina," he said.

The shire engineer, Mr Jeff Bennett, said 110 submissions had been received, of which 20 opposed the scheme on environ-

mental grounds.

He said the council had two plans for the San Remo Quay development, one comprising 450 berths to cost about \$10 million and a larger option of 650 berths, estimated to cost between \$15 million and \$20 million.

"I expect we might gain approval in principle for the scheme from the Government early in the New Year," he said.

"We would seek a joint venture to finance the scheme through the private sector with the pre-sale of berths on a 40 or 50-year lease for about \$40,000 or \$50,000 a berth.

The environmental effects study claims the environment would suffer minimal effect and that the marina would not noticeably interfere with natural coastal processes. □

## MIKHAIL LERMENTOV

### V.S.A.G. TRIP MAY 1989

by Don Abell

Following the incredible success of the V.S.A.G. trip to dive the Mikhail Lermontov in April 1988 a number of members decided we had to do it again before it is totally cleaned out.

By the time this article appears in the Club magazine those on the trip should have received their itinerary as we fire up for some amazing diving those booked in are, in addition to myself,

Des Williams  
Ross Luxford  
Dave Moore  
Warren Cannan  
Geoff Birtles  
John Lawler  
Andy Mastrowicz  
Tony Rossi

For those who missed the ravings from the divers on the 1988 trip I will try to explain what we do.

The trip is one full week. We fly to Wellington, New Zealand. On the second day we fly to Picton and join the Little Mermaid. The objective is to do our first dive on that day. The Mermaid moores above the wreck and we do three (or more) dives a day.

The top of the wreck is in fifty feet of water and the bottom is 120 feet. The ship is a full size cruise ship over 20,000 tons. It takes at least three dives to get your bearings. It was holed on a reef and sank quickly so there is plenty left on the ship to see. After each dive is a hot shower and good tucker.

Following this article is a copy of an article distributed by Des Williams in 1988 to explain the story behind it all.

Unfortunately one of the problems of this dive is all the New Zealanders we have to live with for 5 days. They take great delight in rubbishing Aussies at every opportunity. However, in their favour they like a beer and some Aussie red wines. A prerequisite of the trip is that each of us are expected to take at least 3 bottles of red wine to help complement Cookies good cuisine.

Graeme Sinclair, our tour organizer in New Zealand with Leisure Planners New Zealand, has sent a copy of a note he received from his brother. He wondered if a V.S.A.G. member would be able to make some compassionate recommendations. He appreciates our sensitivity. I have had it reprinted here. Advice could be directed to myself or the Editor.\*



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#### ADVICE NEEDED:

I am a sailor in the Royal Navy. My parents live in Portsmouth, Hampshire. My brother in law is an Australian living in Earls Court.

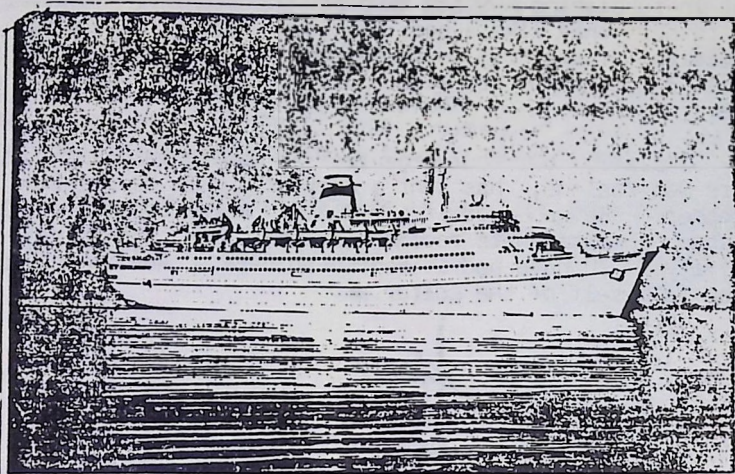
My mother and father have been busted for drug running and depend on my two sisters who are prostitutes in Brighton.

My only brother is serving life for murder.

I am in love with a Jamaican prostitute who solicits around the Naval dockyard. She says she loves me but knows nothing of my family background. We intend to marry as soon as her VD clears up. My being white does not bother her at all.

When I get out of the Navy we will open a whorehouse in Portsmouth and my two sisters will work there to keep the business in the family.

My problem is this: I want to marry this girl and bring her into the family but I want to be completely honest with her. Should I tell her about my brother-in-law being an Aussie?



## Loss of the *Mikhail Lermontov*

The Cook Strait, named after its discoverer, separates New Zealand's North and South Islands. The coast of this island country is laced with skerries in many places. The numerous scenic fiords, straits and islets are great touristic attractions. Cruise ships are not infrequently seen there. All skerries normally require pilotage. When a cruise itinerary includes shore sights and the vessel skirts capes and bays proceeding half a mile off shore, or even closer, special responsibility rests with the pilot. He must be experienced in cruise skerry sailing and have vast knowledge of local hydrological specifics, the relief of the sea bottom, obstructions and lurking dangers.

Captain Jamison, the pilot on board the *Mikhail Lermontov*, seemed to be the right man for the job. He was the man whom Captain Punsford, of New Zealand's Transport Ministry, in charge of the inquiry into the accident, would later describe as a very experienced pilot who knew local waters "like the back of his hand". Commenting upon Captain

Punsford's opinion, the *Lloyd's List* wrote that there was hardly anyone more qualified than Jamison to guide the *Mikhail Lermontov* through that region.

But let us go back to the start of events.

The motorship *Mikhail Lermontov*, a passenger cruise liner of over 20,000 grt owned by the Baltic Shipping Company, was cruising off Australia and New Zealand.

Built in 1972, and modernised ten years later the vessel was in a good technical condition, properly fitted with modern navigational and other facilities and manned by highly-qualified officers and crew. As to comforts, many newspapers in New Zealand called it "luxury class".

The technical condition of the ship, including machinery, hull, systems and equipment had been repeatedly checked by competent authorities both in the USSR and abroad. The ship's Master was Captain V. Vorobyov, 48, a navigator with 25 years' experience.

On February 15, 1986, the *Mikhail Lermontov* left Wellington for Picton, a port in the north of South Island, situated in a cove of the long and narrow Queen Charlotte Sounds.

There were 408 tourists and 330 crew members on board, as well as Chief Pilot Donald Jamison (also Harbour Master of Picton) and a Trainee Pilot.

The next morning, the *Mikhail Lermontov* berthed at Picton, and at 15:00 hours left the port to proceed cruising along the South Island coast.

Apart from the Captain and the Pilots, also the Sixth Captain, two Second Mates, a helmsman and a land-ou man were on the bridge. The weather was less than fair, a strong wind was blowing and it was raining. At 16:00 hours, Chief Navigator S. Stepanishchev and Second Mate S. Gusev took over. At 16:15 hours, the Trainee Pilot left on a pilot boat and the ship proceeded along the Queen Charlotte Sounds.

About half an hour after the Trainee Pilot disembarked, the Captain



wet to the skin, retired to his cabin to change, having warned Jamison that the Chief Navigator was staying in his place. At 17.10 hours, having passed Ship Cove the *Mikhail Lermontov* swung on to a course of 40° plotted earlier and agreed with the Captain, heading for the high seas with a rocky shallow near Cape Jackson left to port.

Several minutes later Jamison ordered 19 lay on a course of 30°, a safe heading to the high seas too, yet at 17.30 hours the Pilot ordered again "Port 10°". The Second Mate pointed out to the Chief Navigator that there was some surging ahead on the port and the ship was heading for danger. The latter passed the message to the Pilot who replied that his intention was to get closer to Cape Jackson so that passengers could see the coast. In this way the ship steadied on a new course of 35°.

As the ship reached abeam of Cape Jackson less than a mile away, the passage between Cape Jackson and the Jackson Head Lighthouse came into view. Jamison made a sudden decision to take the ship through the passage and to enter it ordered the helm to port again. Stepanishchev asked the Pilot for an explanation and was given a reassuring reply. Precious minutes were lost in these exchanges. The entrance to the narrow was now two or three cables off. At that time even if Stepanishchev had realised the imminent danger he would have been unable to avert an accident. At 17.38 hours the ship hit an underwater rock.

Strong inertia made it move along into deepwater.

The Captain rushed to the bridge, and saw the liner was between the Lighthouse and the shore, off the course plotted earlier and indicated to the Pilot.

Not a minute could be lost. The general alarm was sounded on board, and emergency parties began to search for the location and size of the damage. Reports soon came to the bridge that water was flooding the lavatories, the gym, the laundry rooms and other spaces. Pumps could not cope with the incoming water. A list to starboard developed and kept increasing slowly. It became obvious that there was a threat of sinking. The Captain decided to beach the ship onto an offshore sand bank in Port Gore Bay. At 18.20 hours, water was

discovered seeping into the auxiliary engine room through a sliding door separating it from the flooded refrigeration compartment.

Despite all efforts of the crew, at 19.10 hours water began to enter the main distribution board room. The list had now reached 12°. At 19.18 hours the main distribution board short-circuited. The ship came to a halt half a mile from the chosen grounding spot.

Right after the collision with the submerged rocks, while most of the crew were fighting flooding, preparations started to get lifesaving tenders, boats and rafts ready for launching. One hour before the ship lost propulsion lifesaving facilities were ready for use, and were actually launched ten minutes after standstill. Disembarkation of passengers commenced. With the ship listing, the general atmosphere was hardly calm, yet there was no panic, that horrible companion of passenger shipwrecks. The crew helped passengers to disembark and reassured those waiting for their turn in passages and corridors. Frail and elderly tourists were carried in arms and on shoulders. The conditions were far from ideal for disembarkation but thanks to the skill and patience of the crew it was completed in two hours. None of the passengers suffered any serious injury.

As late as 21.30 hours, with most of the passengers in lifeboats, the crew were told to abandon ship.

At 22.40 hours, with a list of 85° to starboard the *Mikhail Lermontov* sank in 33 metres of water. Twenty minutes before it went down the Captain disembarked himself.

All crew members of the Soviet liner deserve praise for their behaviour in the emergency. But what was the reason for their having to risk their lives? How did that extreme situation come about? These are the questions that keep worrying us.

Let us refer to the reputable British *Lloyd's List*: "Captain Jamison was navigating the ship by visual means and at no time referred to charts of the area. Charts NZ 6153 and NZ 615 were in the chartroom and since leaving Picton, these two charts were used by the ship's officers on watch to plot the ship's progress", and further on: "Captain Jamison had previously navigated small craft with draughts up to two metres through the passage but had no detailed knowledge of the

soundings and obstructions in the passage."

Now, what are the conclusions? Had there been no pilot on the bridge, no disaster would have occurred! By the way, there could well have been no pilot, in fact, since the hazardous passage where the *Mikhail Lermontov* struck the hidden rocks, lies outside the pilotage area. Captain Jamison, however, having led the ship up to the limits of the pilotage area, failed to report as much either to the Captain before he left the bridge, or to Chief Navigator Stepanishchev, or to Second Mate Gusev. The ship was on a safe course heading for the high seas. It would have been only natural if the Pilot had left the bridge and told Stepanishchev that his duties were over. Instead, he remained on the bridge, without any need whatever, and acted as if preserving his earlier capacity as pilot. First he ordered Port 30°, then even more to port, so that tourists could have a better view of the coast (despite poor weather), and soon turned to a narrow passage where he had fished several times but had only a vague idea about the soundings. His reply to Stepanishchev's question as to his intentions, was that he was going to take the ship between the Cape and the Lighthouse reassuring the Chief Navigator that the depth there was sufficient...

So an expert pilot, the best in the area, whose job it was to assist Master in sailing safely out to sea, initiated actions that led to the liner's loss.

The ship's officers had every reason to trust Pilot Captain Jamison. Earlier, he had piloted the sistership liner *Aleksandr Pushkin* in the same area, and had been commended by its Captain Jamison had also piloted the *Mikhail Lermontov* through skeries on route from Wellington to Picton. To an extent, this might explain why the ship was fully entrusted to the Pilot, but it is no justification for over-trusting him. The Chief Navigator was so sure of the Pilot's unerring judgement that he felt not only to report the change of course and the turn into the narrow passage to the Captain but also to take any action himself to prevent the sinking.

And what about Captain Jamison? He claimed fatigue and gave no other reason for his "impulsive" decision.

## BURN OUT

The image of the typical Australian male is one of a "Bronzed Anzac".

- The type who does well at everything he tries, is somewhat of a larrikin, is irresistible to women and is often found on Bondi Beach drinking beer with his mates and soaking up the sun.

Well it seems as if the image is changing. You may still find our mate on Bondi Beach, but if he's got any sense he'll be wearing a hat and a shirt, and his exposed skin will be lathered in 15 plus ultra violet cream.

You see skin cancer is not only ugly it's lethal. After the common cold and probably gonorrhoea, skin cancer is the most prevalent disease in Australia. Each year it takes the lives of many Australians who have either not noticed it, not been aware of the seriousness of it, or else were too late in having it treated.

There are up to 140,000 cases of skin cancer reported each year and probably as many or more that go undetected.

The 3 main types of skin cancer are: basal cell carcinoma 75-80%; squamous cell carcinoma 20%; and, melanoma 2-3%.

The later melanoma is the most lethal and fastest growing cancer in Australia, and even when it doesn't kill, it does cause premature aging of the skin.

So the idea of having a "healthy tan" is a contradiction in terms. For adults now more aware of the problems of skin cancer it can still often be too late. Many skin cancers are caused by over exposure of the skin as children, so to protect your kids, cover them up - they'll thank you in years to come.

Signed Burnt-Out