

# FATHOMS

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# VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

5-FEB 1980

# FATHOMS

Official journal of the Victorian Sub—Aqua Group

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### general meetings

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

### committee meetings

20th February - Pat Reynold's Place.  
20th March - Alex Talay's Place.

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## EDITORIAL



Welcome to 1990; the 36th year of the V.S.A.G. and one that we are planning and hoping will be filled with plenty of diving activity.

To kick the year off it seemed that most of the V.S.A.G. was at Bermagui. This place is perhaps better known for its game fishing reputation, but from what I've heard, it has plenty to offer divers.

Des Williams, Sally Khan and Tony Tipping have submitted articles about Bermagui which are sure to bring back a lot of memories for those who were there. Seems that the V.S.A.G. mob

also had a record attendance with total numbers of 75 exceeding the 60 odd we had at Wilsons Promontory at Easter last year.

Talking about Wilsons Promontory, printing deadlines make it virtually impossible to include articles about the Australia Day Weekend for this issue of Fathoms. However we are looking forward to another great weekend although I have no doubt it will be somewhat different without our old mate "Captain" Reg Truscott. The full story on Refuge Cove 1990 will be covered in the April/May issue of Fathoms.

This year the Easter break will commence on the evening of Thursday, April 12th and Don Abell has already booked our camp sites at Tidal River.

Last year if you recall we dived Saturday and Sunday so perhaps this year we will be lucky to get 3 days of diveable weather.

In May, Des Williams' group will depart for Truk and Palau. This promises to be a great trip and of course has been booked out for many months.

Plans are also in hand for the Club to return to Port Campbell - not to rebuild the broken arch of London Bridge but to explore the fantastic beauty and great historical interest of this often wild and treacherous coastline.

So just looking ahead over the next few months we have some pretty exciting events coming up, and I hope we see many members participating in the Clubs peak time activities.

At the January Committee Meeting, John Lawler reported that a couple of well known diving clubs were having trouble with lack of support from members. Our members who attended the Interclub Dive in November would know the clubs I'm referring to by their conspicuous absence in one case and poor attendance in the other.

For many years I and other members of this Club have extolled the virtues of V.S.A.G. as being probably the most active of all the non-commercial clubs. Certainly one of the reasons for this, and I have observed the way other clubs are run and how they organize their dives, is that we plan ahead for the Club and dive as a Club. We don't have one lot of divers darting off to dive in one ocean, another lot in another ocean and the rest spread out somewhere else.

This has been one of the strengths of V.S.A.G. over the years. When we organize a dive from say Sorrento - we head off to the same area. Now whilst some may not see the significance of this, it is an important part of developing a club culture, and through the culture comes member loyalty and support. This Club has always been bigger than any cliques that have attempted to form and does not encourage the loners to stay as such; we would rather they form part of the overall group.

At the January Committee Meeting the Committee discussed this aspect of club life and I thoroughly endorse it as being both good for the Club and for the members. That is not to say that we are opposed to private dives; quite the contrary - however on Club dives we, i.e. V.S.A.G. dives as a Club.

John Goulding  
Editor

## COMMITTEE NEWS

The following are main points arising from the January Committee Meeting.

1. Cash reserves of the Club - \$9,289.54.
2. The following members will no longer be sent Fathoms as 1989/90 fees have not been paid:

Wayne Hatch  
Stan Medhurst  
Graham Suckling

Any members having current contact details for the above 3 is asked to notify the Secretary.

3. Dive Calendar extended.
4. Noel Robertson was accepted as a new member. Noel was introduced to the Club by Andy Mastrowicz.
5. The practice of having boat levies for trips away will be dropped and in place boat dive fees for trips away will be determined according to the destination and other relevant factors. Should there be either no diving or very limited diving on a trip away a boat levy may be imposed to enable boat owners to recoup fuel costs.
6. V.S.A.G. current boat fee for day dives is \$16.00 and the Committee agreed to maintain this level for the time being.

As a comparison it was reported that charter boat fees at Bermagui were: \$35.00 for 1 dive.  
\$55.00 for 2 dives.

7. The Downlow Awards Program will go into recess for 6 months due to reported support problems within Marine Diving Group and Melbourne Bottom Scratchers.

A date for the 1989 Downlow Awards Presentation is yet to be set.\*



## THE CHRISTMAS DIVE - 10TH DECEMBER, 1989

by Don Abell

The last dive before Christmas is a V.S.A.G. tradition. It is not usually the last dive of the year, but we have a small celebration before a large number of members head off on the Annual Christmas Venture.

Now 1989 by any measure has been an incredible year around the world. We have seen changes which were unexpected at this time and maybe in our lifetime.

I refer of course to the history of our time:

- Soviet troops leave Afganistan.
- The Berlin Wall opens and effectively crumbles.
- Democracy re-established in Eastern block countries.
- Major concessions are made for blacks in South Africa. We see (perhaps) the start of the end of Apartheid.
- Human slaughter in Beijing as Communism puts its value on human life.
- Pilots and Government bring the country to a standstill.
- Hooker Corporation goes into liquidation and starts the domino effect of major corporation failures.
- Bazza finishes work at the Tipping's.
- Alex Talay's engagement.

Well our Christmas dive almost joined the list of major world events. As I took bookings for the dive it was obvious that the female divers were out numbering the males. The thought of this was enough to make my blood run cold. It could mean the end of V.S.A.G. as we have known it for 35 years.

How would the old members react. Consider the Brian Lynch's, Justin Liddy's, John Noonan's who hardly knew of female members. Not to mention Dave Carroll who would turn in his grave (figuratively speaking). I had visions of Life Memberships being returned in disgust.

However all my fear was unfounded. One late starter took the sexes to even numbers and then good old Bazza saved the day and reasserted male dominance on the day.

So we all gathered on a beautiful morning at Sorrento except Alex who had been there overnight testing the stabilizers. With two boats our crew comprised Rae, Amanda, Fiona, Mandy Wookey, Cheryl, Ross, Alex, Bazza, Pat, Jack and your illustrious Dive Captain. J.L. and Charlie joined us latter with Jan and another mysterious lady in Charlie's life.

Diving was good. We made dive No. 1 off the back beaches and then proceeded inside the bay for an easy second dive. This was probably highlighted by Alex and Pat catching two monster crays. Alex gave the smaller one to Pat with the assurance that the smaller ones are tastier. We all believe you Alex.

We gathered at Sorrento for the traditional B.B.Q., however interest had faded a little as people left for home. The deserters were predominantly the women of course. Tony Tipping has assured me that his medical training proves the female of the species has less stamina than the male.

Big Mick who doesn't mind missing a dive, but hates to miss a drink turned up to join us. Although low key it was a pleasant way to finish the day.

So the men of V.S.A.G. keep their reputation in tact, but I can see a warning - there is no room for complacency, even in V.S.A.G.\*

## MONTAGU ISLAND

SATURDAY 30TH DECEMBER, 1989

by Des Williams

As I descended through the clear water to bottom out at 40 ft. there was Graeme Blanchard with a Port Jackson shark in each hand. Fumbling for my camera, I looked up to see that Ross Luxford had hold of a third one, so I focused and fired the strobe. The sharks were released in an aggro mood and one turned back on Graeme and clamped onto his air line in anger. It wasn't about to let go either and I had to beat it on the nose with my knife for some time before it let go.

Not a bad start to this our fourth dive at Montagu Island. The visibility was about 50-60 ft. and there were plenty of fish about in this wide crevice known locally as Shark Alley.

Down the sloping alley we swam to a gigantic boulder at 80 ft. hoping to see the resident Grey Nurse sharks. After a pause, we decided to return up the alleyway to a shallower depth. Then Graeme pointed over my shoulder and I turned to see a 6 ft. Grey Nurse shark cruising away from us at a leisurely pace. There were plenty of other V.S.A.G. divers down the alleyway from us and the shark was heading their way.

Then a large Blue Groper began to eyeball us like a dog looking for a feed, so we broke open some sea urchins, creating a feeding frenzy amongst hoards of smaller fish, with the big Blue Groper taking the bulk from our hands. Bob Scott found a real mate and I photographed at close range the large fish eating at "Scotties Diner".

The smell of all that food attracted moray eels and we each had one to inspect at close range; fascinating creatures. More Blue Groper buzzing around, Bob Scott poking a Wobbegong shark under a ledge, a large cray in a ledge with an octopus and Sant and Sally calling me over to photograph a small Wobbegong lying on the bottom apparently asleep. Plenty happening on this dive and with a large group of divers all together in such clear water, we were able to signal one another and really enjoy the dive.



We surfaced after 45 minutes with almost no air left in our tanks and plenty to talk about. Our best dive at Montagu Island so far this trip.

Note: A few days later I photographed a Grey Nurse shark at 10 ft. distance at the same dive site. See how we did it, when I present a slide show of our trip at the V.S.A.G. February 15th, 1990 meeting.

P.S. My personal thanks to Ross Luxford for organizing such an enjoyable dive/holiday. Remember Ross, a Dive Captain's lot is not a happy one!\*

## BAZZA'S 50TH BIRTHDAY

COME AND HAVE A BEER WITH BAZZA  
ON HIS  
50TH BIRTHDAY

SATURDAY 24TH FEBRUARY AT ABOUT 8.00 P.M.

BAZZA'S turning on the BEER, but please folks bring a plate.

Details from Marie - 782 2549

LOT 4 DANDENONG HASTINGS ROAD, LANGWARRIN

### PRESENT SUGGESTIONS:

- \* Walking Stick.
- \* Hair Restorer.
- \* Wrinkle Remover.
- \* Dr. Dangle's Vitality Pills.
- \* Book - How To Be Nifty When You're Fifty.
- \* AMP's Retirement Planning Guide.
- \* Book - 50 Ways To Remember What You Did . . .  
Yesterday!
- \* Etc.

## FISHES WE SAW ON OUR BERMAGUI TRIP

by Des Williams

We certainly came across some of the most exciting marine animals during our V.S.A.G. Christmas trip to Bermagui this year. Set out below are a few of them, with comments from my copy of THE MARINE & FRESHWATER FISHES OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA by Glover and Southcott.

### WOBBERGONG - *Squalus maculatus*

A large shark with a broad flattened body. Mouth bordered with weed-like flaps of skin. The teeth are long and sharp and can inflict a nasty wound. Lives in reef caves in rather shallow water. Length up to 3 m. Viviparous. Considered to be dangerous to man. A fisherman who trod on one had his foot torn off. The flesh is quite palatable and the beautifully coloured skin has been used in the manufacture of handbags and shoes.

Note: Tony Tipping has given enough of these animals a hard time over the years and this year was no exception. Just hope I am around to photograph the action when a Wobby bites back.

### PORT JACKSON SHARK - *Squalus portusjacksoni*

This harmless species is very common. It is oviparous and the eggs are enclosed in a chitinous case bearing a double spiral flange. Sharks of this family are sometimes said to be living fossils, as they are very similar to fossil shark remains found in rocks of the Carboniferous age about 200-250 million years old. Length about 1.4 m. The two dorsal fins each bear a fixed spine with venomous capability.

Note: We saw plenty of these creatures and disturbed their sleep. But, remember those dorsal fin spikes when next you have one by the tail - they CAN hurt!

GREY NURSE - *Carcharias arenarius*

A large shark with teeth long and awl-like, with a small spine-like cusp on either side of each tooth. Grows to a length of 5 m. The large size of this species, the fearful array of long, sharp teeth and its speed and ferocity when attacking, make it a dangerous enemy of man.

Note: The one we approached so closely was probably about 2.5 m.-3 m. in length and a beautiful creature to see.

SHORT SUNFISH - *Orthragoriscus ramsayi*

The body is deep and compressed greatly, the small mouth bears teeth fused into a single plate in each jaw. Body is covered with small carinate horny scales. Colour uniformly dull brown or greyish. Weight to more than one tonne, length over 3 m.

Note: We passed many Sunfish lazing on the surface and Doug Catherall slipped over the side one morning on our way to Montagu to get a closer look at this mighty fish.

BLUE GROPER - *Labrus gouldii*

Body deep and robust, mouth moderate size, lips greatly thickened. Four large canine anterior teeth in each jaw, lateral teeth small more or less cemented together. Colour variable, generally purplish-blue. The Blue Groper has been speared and weighed in at over 36 kgs. Diet includes small crabs and fish, molluscs and starfish.

Note: Plenty of these wonderful fish on every dive we made, and we spent a lot of time feeding them sea urchins.

YELLOWTAIL KINGFISH - *Seriola grandis*

Colour dark blue above, tending to purple, silvery below, the two colours separated by a broad yellowish-green longitudinal band. Dorsal and pectoral fins yellow. Length 2.5 m., weight to 68 kgs. A fast swimmer and tenacious fighter for anglers, is found in large schools.



Note: This fish was seen in schools by some of our group and taken on a hand line by Messrs Luxford, Blanchard & Williams early one morning on a visit to Montagu at dawn.

## ALBACORE TUNA - Scomber germon

Colour of body dark blue above, silvery below. Length to 76 cm., weight to 8.2 kgs. The Albacore is the most prized of the tunas for the quality of its flesh. It is the most important of the American Tunas.

Note: Better ask John Lawler and Jan the details of their catch of this beautiful looking fish. I believe Jan caught her Albacore whilst trawling a line on the way home from a dive.\*

## MEDIA WATCH

# Cray firm urged to think 'big'

BY THERESA KYNE

The State Government has urged a Portland crayfish exporter to stop lucrative trade in Japanese wedding crayfish.

Churchill Fisheries owner, Mr Alan Churchill, has been told to develop an international industry to keep the company from moving interstate.

He said he is already supplying Asian markets with 100,000 crayfish which average \$25 kg. and adding crays. He said for the smaller crays subsidised his other exports.

The Conservation, Forests and Lands Minister, Ms Satchell, has enforced a Victorian regulation banning local firms holding or processing small crays legally caught in South Australia.

Mr Churchill said it would see his company close its doors by the end of this week, adding the only option was to relocate to South Australia.

His company had exported \$1.3 million in crayfish since the South Australian season opened on October 1, equal to the total amount for the last financial year.

"We were expecting a \$5 million turnover by the end of the financial year, we had the orders, we had the crays, but now we have nothing," he said.

"It is ridiculous, the minister has blatantly stood her ground on a conservation issue and has failed to take any advice from the industry."

Mr Churchill claimed there were up to 30 South Australian boats fishing for undersized crays in Victorian waters daily, "making a mockery of the ban."

"The Herald" -  
4th December, 1989.

### EDITOR'S COMMENT

This is a scandalous situation. Too often divers are blamed for by professional fishermen for depleting crayfish stocks. How about cleaning up their own act!!

Editor

# Diver drowns in seaweed snare

A SCUBA diving instructor drowned when he became tangled in kelp while searching for crayfish off Portsea at the weekend.

Fifteen colleagues launched a frantic search after they became concerned for the man's safety on Sunday afternoon.

They later found the body of 26-year-old Andrew Mairs, of Bellbird Court, Springvale South, tangled in kelp.

In a similar tragedy, a 22-year-old man drowned yesterday after becoming snared in seaweed during a rescue attempt in northern Sydney.

And in a Christmas Eve drowning, a three-year-old boy died when he fell into a swimming pool at his grandparents' home at Mt Waverley.

## By BRUCE TOBIN

Sgt Bruce Taylor, of Sorrento police, said Mr Mairs was snorkelling at Point Nepean looking for crayfish.

Mr Mairs had been on a boat with seven other divers from the Melbourne Dive Club, but he snorkelled alone, Sgt Taylor said.

He said the man was equipped with a snorkel, flippers, half wetsuit, weight belt and mask.

He was last seen snorkelling about 250 m offshore about 4.10 pm.

Sgt Taylor said when the other divers on the boat, operated by Diver Instruction Services, hadn't spotted their friend for a while they became worried.

About 15 divers immediately started an underwater line search and police were notified. "All his friends went out

to look for him," Sgt Taylor said. He said a police helicopter, the Southern Peninsula rescue helicopter and the police search and rescue squad, joined the search.

Divers found the man's body in about 5 m of water.

A Christmas Day beach picnic went disastrously wrong when three attempted surf rescues ended in tragedy.

NSW police said a 22-year-old man had been swimming at Dee Why with his teenage niece who went to help a seven-year-old boy who was struggling in the surf.

But then she ran into trouble and the man drowned when he tried to rescue both youngsters.

Police said the man became entangled in weeds and was dragged below the surface about 2.20 pm. A second man helped

save the girl and boy by supporting them until lifesavers arrived in a dinghy.

All three were plucked from the water by a surf lifesaver and the man's body was found two hours later wrapped in seaweed.

A large crowd watched as rescuers searched for the man for 40 minutes.

In the other Christmas Eve drowning, police said the boy had been with his family at his grandparents' house in Kathleen Ave.

They said he was reported missing by his parents after he had wandered from the house.

But he was later found in the swimming pool in the backyard of the house about 5 pm.

Ambulance officers tried to resuscitate the boy for more than 40 minutes but he didn't respond.

The dead boy's name has not been released.

Sunday 26th December, 1989.



## Tourists can dip into history as bay wrecks are marked

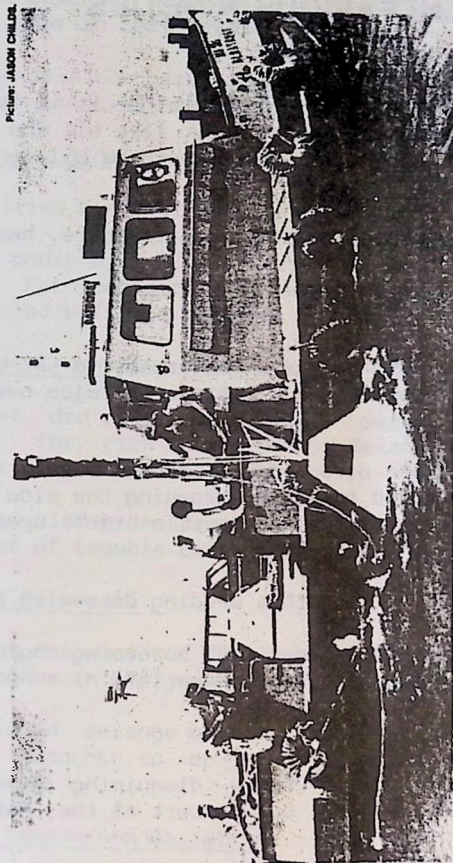
By JO CHANDLER

Three underwater sign-posts were dropped into Port Phillip Bay yesterday in the first stage of a long-term effort to make the bay's maritime heritage more accessible to Victorians and tourists.

The Minister for Planning and Environment, Mr Roper, helped drop one of the engraved concrete markers into the sea at the spot where the Mountain Maid foundered in 1858 after it was heaved into Melbourne with a cargo of rice, sugar and rope.

The markers, positioned alongside the wrecks of the Mountain Maid, the Hurricane (sunk in 1864) and the brief history of each ship and a warning against vandalism and theft from the site.

Mr Roper said the positions of the other wrecks as they lie on the underwater heritage trail would be published in ourist brochures which would help Victorians, particularly the increasing number of recreational



Picture: JASON CHAMBERLAIN

Like a belated headline the underwater marker for the ship, Empress of the Sea, is eased into place. The ship rests — not entirely peacefully, thanks to inquisitive divers — off shore from Queenscliff.

divers, appreciate and explore Port Phillip Bay.

"Our bay is a great piece of water, it leaves that party little Sydney Harour for dead," Mr Roper said. "It's much bigger and better."

The three sites marked yesterday were selected as representative of three significant periods in Victoria's maritime history, Mr Roper said.

The Empress of the Sea was an early immigration and gold rush vessel, the Hurricane was typi-

cal of the iron sailing ships involved in international trade and the Mountain Maid, a wooden ship, traded with South-East Asia and African nations.

When it was completed, divers would have of Victoria's comprehensive tour of Victoria's maritime history, Mr Roper said.

Research, Identification and siting of the Identification plaques is being carried out through the Victoria Archaeological Survey.



"The Age" - 24th November 1989.



## V.S.A.G.'s NEFARIOUS NINETIES

by Don Abell

As we now enter the 1990's (it's agruable whether it is a new decade as yet) we should take the opportunity, like all the other publications, to predict where some of our members will end up through the next 10 years.

Keeping in mind the characteristics of present members, here are some predictions.

### Alex Talay

Alex let caution rule. By 1995 he was almost ready to set a date with fiancée Kerry. Alex had only won Tattsлото twice over the five years.

These ill-gotten gains were directed to race horses. Alex combined his love of diving and racing by drowning the slow ones. He was charged by the R.S.P.C.A. and spent a brief spell in Pentridge.

1999 saw Alex very close to setting that wedding date with Kerry.

A big turn out at Alex's 49th Birthday with a rousing chorus of the Bond theme song "They Said He'd Never Make It".

### Mick Jeacle

Mick made a fortune in the early 90's by disguising Annie as Sheena Easton and promoting a sell out concert at the National Tennis Centre.

Mick bought a hotel at Queenscliffe and let it out to National Mutual Royal for managers conferences. Mick reckoned this to be utopia. Drinking for free and also collecting the 100% mark-up.

### Tony Rossi

Tony put down his deposit for every long weekend and overseas dive trip through the 10 years but has yet to attend one. Tony feels the 21st Century is looking better.

As a business man Tony also made his fortune. Unfortunately it all went in boat repairs.

Tony sold the barge in 1997 and replaced it with "a real bargain" which is still having finishing touches done in 1999.

### Pat Reynolds

Realized his real talents and freelanced as a professional decky.

Was badly bitten by a Grey Nurse in 1998. A search was mounted. All Pat could remember was "she was wearing a red cape and her cap had a little badge on it".

### Brian Lynch

Never did return to diving. Set up a triathalon ranch in the U.S. for rich housewives. Brian gave practical tuition in all four of the basic skills.

Brian died prematurely of over-exertion. Rumoured that they had a lot of trouble closing the coffin lid.

### Doug Catherall

Spent the whole of the 10 years travelling on Chinese trains with a magnum in his jacket and pretending to be asleep.

Achieved revenge but was never charged by the authorities as he was thought to be part of a Government Population Control Program.

### Rae Lawson/Amanda Tutton

After the 1989 Christmas Party they went in to professional raffle gambling. Able to retire in 1991.

### Fiona Bruce

Investigations by her previous employer, the V.D. Clinic, found that Fiona was totally without any medical qualification.

Despite their initial concern she was re-employed because of her natural enthusiasm and ability to come to grips with the problems of the job.

### Igor Chernishov

Igor returned to the Club every other year between attempts to get his personal affairs in order.

Igor was awarded a Life Membership in 1999 for his endurance and his contribution to subject matter for "Fathoms" articles.

### John Lawler

John ended up quite wealthy. It is rumoured that after leaving his previous employer he lived on canned tuna from his garage until 1995 and saved his fortune on the cost of food.

### Jack Namiota

Jack was given his own television show called "Namiota's Believe It Or Not" in which he recounted stories of the monsters of the deep.

### Tony Tipping

Enthusiasm for diving dropped a little when it was discovered that all of Tony's "RECORDS" in the Club were without foundation.

Tony did continue to be our leader of fashion and was voted the best dressed man of 1977, however the vote was taken in 1997.

By 1999 Tony and Marg had six children. He didn't even get the operation right.

### Paul Tipping

Paul's new job meant much travel in the early '90's. As a direct result he had 12 children by 1995 and never did put 2 and 2 together.



Paul went into politics and was Leader of the Opposition by 1999. This was not so much due to political commitment, but because Paul realized that "The Lodge" was the only place big enough for his family.

### Paul Sier

Paul took to the cloth and became a T.V. evangelist. "It beats dentures for putting the bite on people".

### Barry Truscott

Barry was kept busy by the Tipping's through the '90's building new bedrooms. Barry would reliably put in one day a month at the Tipping's and gave a new meaning to the word "tomorrow" for the Macquarie Dictionary as in "I'll be back to finish it tomorrow".

Barry had a bad spell in the late '90's when Marie and Sam went on holiday together. Barry realized that, not only did he not know how to cook, but he didn't even know where the kitchen was in his Frankston Palace.

Thank God for the Salvos.

### Bill Jansen

Finally bought a new boat and arranged to come diving in 1995. On arriving at the dive sight Bill realized that he had never owned any diving gear.

### Des Williams

In 1994 was committed to an institution for the insane when he found that the Coramba had never really sunk, but was being used as a fishing boat from San Remo.

On his release in 1997 Des bought the Coramba and paid to have it scuttled. 1999 saw Des happily searching for the wreck.

John Goulding

John left the airline and 1995 saw him pursuing his real talents as an actor with the Royal Shakespearian Company at the Barbicon in London. He had been spotted during the infamous Bicentennial Re-enactment at Refuge Cove.

By 1999 John had returned to Aussie and bought an old 13 ton, 37 foot boat to sail around Bass Strait. John bought it for a rock bottom price because no one else could start the engine.

John is now seen zig zagging around Wilsons Promontory bare footed up to his neck and wearing an old cloth cap. No one knows if he is content because they can't understand his mumbling.

Fathoms:

By 1999 this was a Murdoch Publication. However the price remained constant at about 200 Yen.\*

EDITOR'S COMMENT:

This recount of the Nefarious Nineties would not be complete without mention of Don Abell.

Don started the '90's as a quiet respectable partner of accounting firm Touche Ross and President of V.S.A.G. As the '90's progressed and more and more Australian companies went to the wall Don became engrossed in liquidations, take-overs, wind-ups, wind-downs, lock-outs, lock-ins, asset strips, mergers, wipe-outs, bankruptcies, blow outs, until there was just about no local industry or business left. It was then realized that all of the companies that had gone bust had been clients of Don's prior to their demise and had relied entirely on his accounting and management advice. Never one to doubt his own brilliance Don then set about to rewrite the whole science of accounting in a book called "WHY THE DEBIT SIDE SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE SIDE NEAREST THE DOOR . . . NOT THE WINDOW".

As President of V.S.A.G. Don also made his mark. Despite attempted coups and sabotage attacks against him for spending





## TIP'S TIT-BITS

by Tony Tipping

This year's Christmas trip will be long remembered as one of the best - certainly it had to be the biggest we've had, 75 men, women and children in our group according to one statistician. I only hope this quietens our President, Don Abell who hasn't stopped bragging about last Easter's 66 odd at Tidal River. Well done Ross, you even managed to get the weather right until the day after you and most of the mob went home. The camp itself was passable - clean toilets and showers etc. and plenty of facilities and fun and games for kids but lousy roads within and uneven sites that didn't help when the rain eventually did come, left it a long way short of the camps at Byron Bay and I'm told Port Lincoln. Nine boats arrived, too, that's got to be a record on an interstate trip. All this goes to show that if you go away en masse within one day of Melbourne you're guaranteed a large turn out.

Now for some of the highlights of the trip:

Christmas Day was a classic - only the Jeacle's, Scott's and Tipping's had arrived a few days early but that didn't stop anyone from enjoying themselves. Father Christmas even showed up at our tents and drank all the beer left for him - he would have been a nice old mess after leaving the caravan park, but not as bad as Michael and Robert later that afternoon at the pool - there they were after Christmas dinner on a 38° day both elephants trunk and snoring in unison - must have been because the webber cooked the turkey too slowly!

Plenty of domestics this year and no I wasn't exempt either - Marg and I always have a few rows everyone knows that, so we didn't want to disappoint the gallery, but we would have been upstaged several times over by many other happily married or engaged couples - at this stage I won't elaborate, besides if I shut up I'll be able to pay off my debts!

While I think of it the lost property report:

One yellow tent peg (a very gentle plastic number girls); a very well preserved brown and white shirt - brown hasn't been the flavour of the month for a while so it's been well looked after; and a white floppy hat complete with teeth marks!

I was going to leave the women's work issue alone this year, but how can you when the only attached bloke at our camp who got out of it was Bazza - all you other lot are weak (me included) but it did help get out diving more than I expected! The other sexist matter was the girls night out at the club - what about next year for the fellas! I liked the story about the art and craft display the wives spun - all they really really wanted was to grab something long and hard with a knob at the end, that spits after a few tugs - yes, poker machines!

The diving reports are probably elsewhere in Fathoms - no doubt Des, Ross and Mick can be believed so I won't say too much apart from the fact that of the eight trips and ten dives I did, only two could be said to be ordinary - all the others especially at Montagu Island were memorable - visibility up to 100 feet plus, plenty of real sharks - how about that big one Mick and Jan on the last dive and yes the photos did come out. Managed to capture a couple of schools of kingies on film not to mention the clear blue water and many other species of fauna and flora. Despite these highlights the best 10 minutes of any dive I've had since Truk ten years ago was the huge school of trevally - there we were with incredible visibility when it suddenly went dark because of the complete density of fish - I'll probably never see anything like it again and of course it was a day I left the camera in the boat! Yep the diving out at the island was great, but you had to go for it - anywhere else was a wasted effort by comparison. On the minus side 28 km. was a long bash each way to Montagu - next time make sure we go from Narooma (where we stayed 1979/80 Christmas trip) - its only about 8 km.

Everyone knows how the big bloke is so easy on air and after buddying with him most dives I've finally worked out how he does it - besides I'm no gulper myself. He lets you do all the motoring around down there while he purves at bloody morays and

feeds Blue Groper - well by the last dive we were consistently diving over an hour (thanks to Mick's deco toy) and I was getting within a couple of hundred PSI of him and besides he probably doesn't even talk to the fish!

The only other subject left - who was the V.S.A.G. Iron Man/Woman - it's got to go to one of the group of five who battled inclement weather, rugged terrain and mongrel leaches to make a successful assault on Mt. Dromedary - Australia's equivalent to Kilimanjaro - it's highest single standing mountain (not in a range). Although along with Leona and Mick I made it up OK, the individual award has to go to Kerry - built like one of those celery sticks she lives on, she carted Alex and his tobacco sandwiches single handedly all the way up and back in appalling conditions. I can now see the merit in all that huffing and puffing for an hour in the tent, I mean on the push-bike riding up and down all those hills each morning!

All in all Christmas with V.S.A.G. 1989/90 was pretty good - hope to do it all again in about eleven months and if we adults can enjoy it as much as all the kids seem to wherever we go I reckon it'll be well worth it!\*