

FATHOMS

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VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

FATHOMS

Official journal of the Victorian Sub—Aqua Group

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Next general meetings

Thursday 20th June 8.00 p.m.
Thursday 18th July 8.00 p.m.
North Melbourne Football Club
Fogarty Street, North Melbourne.

Next committee meetings

25th June - Bob Scott's Place.
23rd July - Neil Medhurst's Place.

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EDITORIAL



In this issue of Fathoms - you'll find 2 articles from me, both referring to the excellent diving conditions and great water visibility that were recently experienced.

Whilst many divers tend to hang up their flippers after the end of Summer, those who know a little more about it, also know that some of the best months for diving conditions occur during Autumn and Winter.

If you can put up with the minor discomfort of the colder weather, there's a good chance that your dive enjoyment will be enriched.

Some tips on enjoying Winter diving include:-

- * Pack a thermos (preferably the hardy stainless steel type) with hot soup.
- * Take a thick parka and a spray jacket to keep the parka dry, and a woollen cap.
- * Be prepared to take off your wetsuit top between dives. The parka will keep you warmer whilst on the surface, and the shock of squirming back into your wet wetsuit top will be quickly overcome when you jump back into the water!!!

I don't know about the thermal qualities of lycra wetsuits, but Don Abell and Ross Luxford seem to use theirs regularly during the Winter. I used to find a T-shirt worn under the wetsuit had a warming effect, but on second thoughts that might have been mind over matter.

I find the worst part about cold weather diving is during the few moments after a dive when I'm removing my wetsuit top, however the old parka, spray jacket and hot soup soon fix that.

Some disturbing rumours suggest that divers will be required to have licences to take abalone and scallops before too long. Perhaps this is part of the State Government's grand plan to require all amateur and recreational anglers, and fishermen/fisherwomen, to purchase a \$5.00 licence to throw a line into Port Phillip and Westernport Bays. It seems that the professional fishermen are no longer able to make a decent living from fishing these waters, so in order to compensate them, the Government is going to slap a licence fee on every man, woman and kid who wants to try their luck, whether it be at St. Kilda Pier or trawling for kingies in the Rip.

It ought to be a real revenue earner all right! Can't you just see the windfall gain for the government coffers in fines alone! Half the people dangling lines around any of the bay side piers probably can't even speak English, let alone understand what a licence is! Not only that . . . but its a sacred childhood right to ride a bike down to a pier with a K-Mart rod and a bucket full of home dug worms to try one's luck.

Whilst I can sympathize with the economic plight of the professional fishermen, I can't help but be skeptical about the motives of the moguls of Spring Street, who may well see this as just another way of topping up the State's depleted funds. On the other hand of course, keen anglers might well be prepared to pay a licence fee in order to stop professional fishing in the bays. However, one aspect that certainly needs clarification is the effect caused by both professional and amateur fishing on fish stocks.

As divers we all know how we've been restricted in regards to bag limits on crayfish, abalone and scallops. Whilst the present limits are adequate for private consumption, we should not forget that the professional fishing lobby is trying to have these limits further reduced, and no doubt unfounded suggestions have been made that we amateurs are seriously effecting stocks of these shellfish and the livelihood of the professionals.

If the current proposal to introduce a \$5.00 angling fee comes to fruition, will it only be a matter of time before our licence fee to take crayfish will increase, so as to compensate the professionals for poor catches?

John Goulding
Editor

GUEST SPEAKER

JUNE GENERAL MEETING

20TH JUNE, 1991

J O H N L I P P M A N N

Co-author of the book - "THE D.E.S. EMERGENCY HANDBOOK" will give a presentation to the Club on diving safety, and diver emergency treatment.

DON'T MISS THIS PRESENTATION!

SAFETY DIE MARKERS ARE NOW AVAILABLE AT
JOHN'S DIVE SHOP, 294 ST. KILDA ROAD, ST. KILDA
AT \$12.50

V.S.A.G. COMMITTEE NEWS

The following is a summary of main points raised at the April and May Committee Meetings.

- * Quotes are being obtained from insurance companies for insurance of the Club's compressor.
- * The purchase of 6 first aid kits for members boats was approved.
- * Cash reserves of the Club as at 21/5/91 were \$10,465.82.
- * Suggestions and venues for the V.S.A.G. Christmas Party were discussed, but nothing resolved.*

V.S.A.G. WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

Applications for membership from the following people were accepted by the Committee in April:-

IAN JAGGER.
COLIN KAY.
GREG BOYLES.

Would members please extend their welcome to Ian, Colin and Greg and help them settle into V.S.A.G.'s unique culture.*

A number of members usually meet before the monthly General Meetings at the Black Prince Hotel, 99 Curzon Street, North Melbourne.

WHY NOT JOIN US? 6.30 - 8.00 P.M.

The foods fine and there's good beer and wine.

V.S.A.G. HOLDS SPECIAL MEETING ON DIVE SAFETY PROCEDURES

by John Goulding

On the 2nd May, the V.S.A.G. Committee and boat owners were summoned to a special meeting for the sole purpose of reviewing the Club's safety procedures.

The meeting which was chaired by Safety Officer, John Lawler, discussed a range of topics including:-

- Membership application requirements.
- Medical certificates.
- Dive training certification standards.
- Check-out dives.
- Dive Captain responsibilities.
- V.S.A.G. standing safety procedures.
- First aid kits.

The meeting was most constructive and John will be publishing the new V.S.A.G. safety requirements shortly.

In the meantime, don't forget that from October this year, octopus regulators will be mandatory on all Club dives.

See separate notice.*

SAFETY IN DIVING. WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?

by Don Abell

Those members and friends who attended the Easter long weekend will remember good diving and, as always, a lot of fun. As I have said on many occasions, that is what V.S.A.G. is all about, diving and good fun.

Some of those who dived at Easter, may also remember that we had an unfortunate incident where a member experienced dizziness and a slight loss of orientation during a dive, suspected Nitrogen Narcosis. Some 3 weeks later the same diver spent some time in the recompression chamber at the Alfred Hospital, possibly as a result of the Easter incident.

It was an unfortunate incident, and one I hope we all learn from. My real concern is that there was some suggestion at the time (not much, but some) that the Club and the Dive Captain were responsible for the incident happening.

As the current President of V.S.A.G., I have a strong opinion on that sort of attitude among members and others. The V.S.A.G. is an organization which comprises members who have gathered for the purpose of their common pursuit - diving. Each of us joins the Club as a qualified diver, who has been trained in the technical aspects of the sport, as well as the safety aspects. The Club is "not a training organization, it is not a regulatory body."

Responsibility for "Safety In Diving" rests with the individual member. Furthermore, each individual is responsible for safe diving practices so as to not risk the safety of fellow divers.

As you are all aware, as a Club we are endeavouring to focus more on safety so that each member improves or maintains their standards. Like the diving industry as a whole, we are learning more about our sport. This improves equipment and standards. I have no doubt that this will continue as long as each of us continues to dive.

The Club will always attempt to make our diving environment as safe as possible. But the Club is made up of individual members who make their own assessment of their diving capabilities and procedures. The Club will not:

- Tell you when to dive.
- Tell you where to dive.
- Tell you how deep to dive.
- Tell you how long to dive for.

Each member should be capable of making their own decisions in regard to such matters.

If you don't like the conditions - Don't dive.

If you don't like the depth - Come up.

Do not expect V.S.A.G. or the Dive Captain to make such decisions. It is not possible to make decisions to cater for 15 individuals on a dive. The Club schedules a dive and a Dive Captain. The Dive Captain makes the arrangements to get you on the water and to a dive site. The Dive Captain cannot, and is not, responsible for planning the individual dives on four or five boats.

Basic training tells us all to plan the dive we are about to do, and discuss that plan with your buddy. Once decided - dive to your plan. Personally, I generally discuss with my buddy how we may vary the dive if the underwater scenario changes. When underwater, if one person feels that they want to surface, we surface.

The buddy system is a safety device, but a diver should not unduly risk the safety of their buddy. I would not want any diver to risk their own safety, because their buddy does not follow normal safety procedures. The Club does not want to lose any member in a diving accident, but more importantly, it does not want to lose two members in a diving accident.

So my opinion is clear. The Club will try to provide a diving environment to the benefit of all members. Where possible we will adopt safety procedures which facilitate safe diving. However, the responsibility for "Safety In Diving" rests with the member - no-one else.

If you need a group which will control you and tell you how to dive. If you want someone to be responsible for your diving, the V.S.A.G. is probably not for you.

It is appropriate that I emphasize, that this is my view of V.S.A.G. membership.

At the time of writing, I have not sought further discussion with the V.S.A.G. Committee.*

WINE SALE

V.S.A.G. members are reminded that we still have quantities of HICKINBOTHAM'S 1983 CABERNET SHIRAZ for sale at \$96.00 a dozen.

This wine, which has been rated very highly, would normally cost about twice that amount if it could still be purchased through the trade, and compares very favourably with wines selling in the \$14.00-\$18.00 a bottle range.

We need to move this stock over the next couple of months, and I would ask you to try and promote it to friends, relatives, work colleagues, etc.

For stock enquiries contact Bob Scott on 763 6872 (H) or 706 3766 (W).

MY EASTER HOLIDAY AT TIDAL RIVER

by Holly Reynolds - almost 11.

On my holiday at Tidal River I had a fabulous time, I saw a wombat one night, and it came very close to me.

I met a lot of new people, and they are my good friends. Rhonda and Chris Llewellyn camped next to us, also Jim, Fiona, Skye and Laura. It was a good time down at the beach with Skye and Laura, paddling in the water and climbing rocks.

Skye and I rode bikes to the beach three times, and a lot of other places also. Rhonda and Fiona took me on a walk to Squeaky Beach, we sat on the nice sand and got our feet wet in the waves. On Sunday afternoon June organized an Easter egg hunt, races, skipping games, and a tug-o-war. Everyone enjoyed the afternoon.

On Sunday night I went to the movies with Rhonda, Kim, Gayle, Nicole and her friend. We saw Kindergarten Cop. It was a great movie. Arnold Schwarzenegger was the main star. On Easter Sunday morning Alex got a surprise when he found an Easter egg above his head, he must have been a good boy. It was a great holiday, thank you everyone who helped make it one. Eighty people were at Tidal River, 50 grown ups and 30 children.*

Editor's Comment:

Thank you Holly for your very interesting story about your holiday. It's good to know that the children had a good time, as well as the grown ups. Counting all the people must have been difficult, because sometimes the grown ups are more like children! Holly - you type very neatly.

Editor

TIP'S TIT-BITS

by Tony Tipping

Easter at Tidal River must have been early this year, because it seems a hell of a long time ago as I write this, and not only that, but I have not dived since! Maarrrg has put her foot down once or twice, e.g. Mothers Day when I was all set to kit up, but never mind I won't squib it in June/July.

No doubt Don Abell has accepted the Dive Captaincy for this venue for life, and has reverberated on this years success and record attendance elsewhere in the magazine and museum. Trouble is he's right - it was another success story - very little rain, two excellent days diving, record numbers and no domestics in our van! Must admit, glad we had the Jayco when it did rain heavily on the Sunday night. June Scott's "compromise" wasn't quite perfect after all - never mind June, you did a wonderful job yet again with the Easter Bunny!

From the diving point of view, this year remains in my mind as the Muzza & Gazza show - I think I dived with both Murray and Garry at different times, but couldn't tell one from the other, they even suck their air at the same rate! (About twice the rate of Big Mick, Bazza and of course myself). Apart from that they are fine chaps and I had no hesitation in passing Garry on his Club check-out dive, or was it Murray?

That cave we found at Norman Island on Good Friday was really spectacular, at about 135 feet you could enter it and go in about 60 feet, whereupon it gradually curved upwards until it was too surgy at 40 feet. I think it would have been here that Tony Rossi got into strife, no doubt you've been back for the third time to the Alfred, when they get stuck into you Tone?

By the time you read this, Don & Nicki Abell will be the proud owners of about a dozen bouncing Rottweilers. It was interesting to hear Don describing the mating session, having to drive to Adelaide, having to depart with large sums of money - I'm in the wrong job. I reckon there are blokes in this diving Club who have been seen with worse looking dogs and they would've done the job for nothing Don!

For non active Winter divers like me, of late there has been some great news so far in the football this year. Of course, it's got to be about Collingwood - now what's wrong with the poor old Magpies? It's obvious at this stage of the season the Mighty Bombers and the West Coast Eagles will play off in the big one, and the poor old Pies will get a well deserved holiday in September. I'm a little bit worried about the Bombers this week, they play Tony Lockett!

It appears that Narooma will be a very popular choice for the Christmas trip this year. Who could forget the contingent Ross Luxford had turn up at Bermagui in 1989. I guess it's obvious most Club members want a one day trip to the venue. The idea of attending a short trip one year and a long trip the next is a reasonable compromise. Despite that we'll head further north of Sydney, say Coffs Harbour before Christmas, and get back to dive Montague Island just after New Years Day. Every time I think back about the dive Mick, Jan and I had, where we saw about 100,000 trevally near Montague - it's got to rate as one of the best ever, not to mention the sharks.*

OCTOPUS REGULATORS

BUY NOW AND SAVE

All members are advised that Octopus Regulators will become mandatory on all Club Dives from 1st October, 1991.

V.S.A.G. can now arrange a special price on an Octopus Regulator.

Please call John Lawler for details on 569 9851 (Home) or 794 8611 (Work).

WHO SAID THAT DIVING IN VICTORIA WAS COLD AND DIRTY?

by John Goulding

I remember once talking to a diving instructor at Heron Island, who on learning that I came from Melbourne told me how much I would enjoy the clarity of the Barrier Reef, - "and to top it all off", he said, - "you wont freeze after 5 minutes".

I didn't bother to tell him that I was well acquainted with the delights of tropical water diving, but rather extolled the virtues of diving in Victoria. To be fair on the guy, he had never dived further south than Brisbane, although the array of diver qualification badges he proudly wore on his spray jacket, would have you think that he had much more diving experience than the 3 years he'd been doing it, since trying it out at an island resort course.

The reason I recall this story is because today (14th April), we dived the 90 foot submarine and followed up with a drift dive inside the bay.

Having buoyed the submarine and descended a few metres down the line - there was the bottom! Sixty to seventy feet below and very clear.

Whilst the shot had missed the submarine by 30 feet, the dark cigar shaped hull and conning tower stood out clear against the sandy bottom.

Inside the submarine, the light filtering down through the hatchways and the stillness of the water, made this dive an absolute delight. And not even old Bazza got cold!

Back inside the bay, we decided on a drift to look for crays and abalone.

The area we picked was anything but cray territory - flat sandy bottom, with a lot of broken stone. However, the visibility was great. From the surface we could see the bottom - 50 feet below,

and on the bottom you could see people leaning over the side of the boat. Whilst it would not rate as a great dive, the finding of some old beer bottles by Marita and Tony Austin, and my own find of an old torpedo bottle, made up for it.

However, it was pleasurable just drifting along in the gentle current, in water that was clear and certainly not cold.*

JOHN'S DIVE SHOP

HAS MOVED

JUST 2 SHOPS UP FROM PREVIOUS LOCATION

TO

294 ST. KILDA ROAD, ST. KILDA.

JOHN'S DIVE SHOP SUPPORTS V.S.A.G.

SAFETY DIVE MARKERS ON SALE TO V.S.A.G. MEMBERS
AT SPECIAL PRICE.

V.S.A.G. CLUB DIVE - 14/4/91

SORRENTO AREA

by Bob Scott

I was having my evening meal on Saturday night, a little earlier than usual, when Big Mick and family arrived (the big Lloyd) and would you believe not a stubbie in the house. I said to the big fella, "sorry Mick it's a house with no booze", and the big fella said to me, "no you little Lloyd, no grog for me I'm driving". So I picked myself up off the floor and said to the misses "put on the billy and make a cuppa," (anyway it's womans work).

Well you are saying to yourself, what's this got to do with a V.S.A.G. Club dive, the big fella and the little garden gnome rang the Dive Captain together, I don't know why in the hell I'm telling you all this, at least it will make my story a little longer than my dive reports at the General Meetings (eh Don?).

Anyway Pat is the Dive Captain. 10 divers, 5 boats and Dive Captain, which made for very comfortable diving, plenty of room, room to swing a tank so to speak.

Doug arrived at my house around 8.00 a.m. We loaded the boat and away we went, and we arrived at the car park at 9.30 a.m. First there, even beat J.L., but there's plenty of time, slack water flood is not till 1.30 p.m.

It's decided to dive the 90 foot sub first, then drop Don onto the Eliza Ramsden. He has been busting his jeans to dive the Eliza for as long as he has been diving with the Club. Well Donny, Sunday was the day, Don dived the Ramsden with about 50 other divers, what a shummozle, it must have been like Bourke Street on a non recession Saturday morning. What was it like fellas? The sub has not in the past been one of my favourite dives, but on Sunday it was magnificent; clear, calm and it had some small fish on it.

A.P.I. Dive Club were there before us, with probably 8 divers.

Doug and I dived on the second shift of V.S.A.G. divers, and it was still reasonably clear. Anyway I did enjoy it, so after a bit of lunch, it was as I said before. Down to the Eliza Ramsden, then on to the scallop beds for our second dive.

Back at the boat ramp, retrieved the boats and headed for home. A good days diving was had by all.*

AIRFILLS - REFUGE COVE

Still outstanding from January are airfills money from:-

- Priya Cardinaletti - 2 Fills \$ 10.00
- Russell Olorenshaw - 1 Fill \$ 5.00

FOR SALE

- DACOR REGULATOR (3 years old).
- SEA HORNET DEPTH/PRESSURE GAUGES (6 months old).
- COLOURED HOSE PROTECTORS.
- MORAY BUOYANCY COMPENSATOR (4 years old).

CONTACT RICHARD MOSEDALE
 TELEPHONE: 305 5346

TOP DAY, TOP DIVE, TOP SPOT

by John Goulding

The notice in the Fathoms Dive Calendar for Sunday 26th May was:-

"SCALLOP DIVE"

MEET AT RYE 10.30 A.M.

Now apart from the fact that I do happen to like scallops, especially when they are cooked in a creamy white wine sauce . . . everything else about scallops is rather dreary . . . swimming along a featureless sandy bottom, vainly searching for the laziest of all sea creatures, whose only skill is to hide in the soft silt stirred up by the flipper fanning hunter. Then when the thrill of the chase has filled the catch bag, the reality of shelling and cleaning the little blighters, and disposing of their stinking guts, normally puts a fitting climax to a day that could have been more entertaining weeding the garden.

So why the hell was I heading down to Rye on 26th May?

For the previous week the weather had been extraordinarily mild. Hardly a breath of wind had disturbed the sea, and all indications looked as if we would have great diving conditions.

By 10.30 a.m. we had 22 divers at the boat ramp, and Mick Jeacle announced that the first dive would be on the 130 foot submarine.

Six V.S.A.G. boats were soon cruising through the swirling, but flat waters of the Rip, and out to the general area of the submarine.

The Autumn haze lingering over the shore made it difficult to find the necessary landmarks, but with great perseverance, Mick eventually buoyed the sub.

As our anchor glided down to the bottom of the sea, the shimmering rope was clearly visible from the surface, and at once

CHRISTMAS TRIP - 1991

by Mick Jeacle

As you are now aware, V.S.A.G. will travel to Narooma for its Christmas trip this year.

Narooma is a paradise for the water enthusiast, offering all kinds of fishing, prawning, swimming, and of course diving.

Those of you who went to Bermagui in 1989 will recall the excellent diving around Montague Island. This island is situated approximately 10 kilometres off shore from Narooma, and access is achieved by negotiating the infamous Narooma Bar. To this end a common sense approach is all that is required, and boat owners will need to check in and out with the base control officer, so a boat licence for N.S.W. waters will be necessary.

To date, the following have indicated they will be attending:-

Mick Jeacle
Tony Tipping
Charlie Brincatt
Sant Khan
Barry Truscott
John Goulding (Possibly)
Des Williams (Possibly)
Paul Sier
Bob Scott

We have booked 15 powered sites (flat and grassy) at East's Van Village, which is ideally situated right in the middle of the town. The Club has paid \$50.00 per site and a further \$50.00 per site is required to be paid by 30th June, 1991.

Accordingly, it is requested that those people wishing to attend bring along \$100.00 deposit to the June Meeting, or post to the Box No. by the end of June. Deposits will be refunded only if cancellations are advised to V.S.A.G. by 1st November, 1991.

Anyone else wishing to reserve a site can do so at the next meeting, or telephone me on (059) 71 2786.*

MEDIA WATCH

Police are on the beat in the deep

By **ANDREW MEYSSSEN**

POLICE have launched an "undercover" operation to hunt for hidden treasure of the sea — including food and other items plundered by deep sea pirates, slavers and sailors — along the rugged Atlantic coast of Newfoundland. The wrecks are thought to contain items of historical value, while others hold crates of 150-year-old champagne and other delicacies of pork and beef.

While the meat and other items may be worthless to the police and marine scientists are keen to protect them as underwater museums.

The police search and the Marine wreck site, while other wrecks are being investigated by the Victorian Phillip Bay wreck site of the 18th century. The wreck to ward off treasure hunters.

The three-masted barkentine ship was found in 12 metres of water off the coast of Eye rock off Quernaduff, Newfoundland, in 1811 while transporting provisions from Canada.

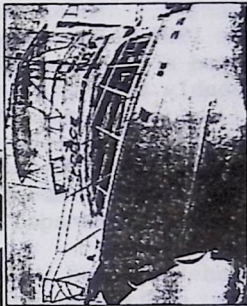
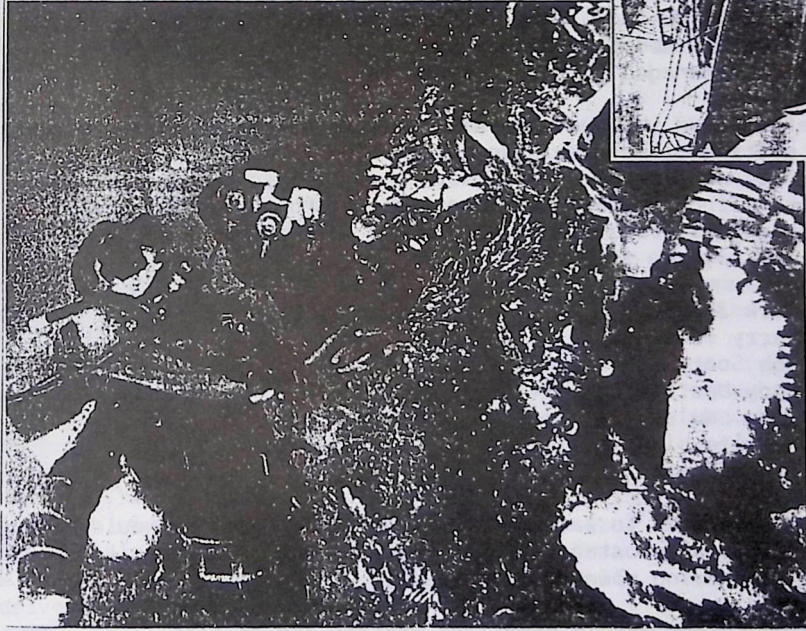
The wreck was discovered and declared a protected site in 1983 after part of the ship was salvaged by divers. Marine archaeologist John G. G. G. G. G. said the hull contained barrels of champagne and other delicacies of pork and beef — the only collection of mid-18th century provisions from a ship in Australia.

She said only divers with special permits could visit the site, while other wrecks are being investigated by the Victorian Phillip Bay wreck site of the 18th century. The wreck to ward off treasure hunters.

"The wrecks have great scientific and historical value," Mrs. She urged divers to respect the wrecks and not to remove anything. Divers had already been prosecuted for removing items from the wreck site. The wreck is located near Port Campbell.

Sen-Constable Kent Clifton-Bligh led the search and rescue team, said police had cracked the case of the shipwreckers who flooded rivers.

He urged divers to respect the wrecks and not to remove anything. Divers had already been prosecuted for removing items from the wreck site. The wreck is located near Port Campbell.



Sen-Constables Barney Wursthorn (left) and Kent Clifton-Bligh check the wreck of the William Scillhouse for signs of illegal diving. The pair work from their search and rescue boat (inset). Pictures: JAY TOWN

EASTER 1991

by Don Abell

Each year the Club books more camp sites at Tidal River, with the aim of making everyone more comfortable and allow us all more room. Each year we seem to get more members and families wanting to attend and so things are no more comfortable. Perhaps the tents, caravans, etc., are also getting bigger.

For 1991 we moved up to 18 camp sites. We matched that with a record attendance of 80 people with 7 boats. Next year we will probably try for 20 camp sites.

Numbers are limited only to the extent of the number of divers we can put onto boats. Four per boat is about right for diving at Tidal River. About 28 divers listed to attend, so I called some favours and managed to get 7 boats.

I had forgotten that we have some retired divers in the Club and some getting tired as old age catches up with them. The result was that we did not require more than 5 boats on either day. However, I do appreciate those members who towed their boats to ensure all divers could dive. Boats in attendance were those of:-

Mick Jeacle
Barry Iruscott
Bob Scott
Andy Mastrowicz
John Lawler
Neville Viapree
Ian Jagger

I would also like to list all those attending, but we would be up for additional postage for Fathoms. Thanks also goes to Mick Jackiw for towing down the compressors.

Diving on Friday was in excellent weather and on flat seas. We were lead astray to Scotty's folly, which was rated as a non dive

off Norman Island. We took the boats to Skull Rock for a relaxing lunch and swim with the seals.

We had a visit from Fisheries & Wildlife Officers, much to the delight of members. Mick Jeacle applied his usual wit, and suggested that all 5 boats speed away in different directions and see what happened. Equally witty, Murray Black suggested that we tell them that Murray's Japanese friend Mitsu Ho was in charge. Now Mitsu Ho knew some words of English, but it was a good bet that the boys from F. & W. didn't know much Japanese. Anyway, they were okay, and even tried to entertain us with some old vaudeville routines, getting on and off our boats.

Saturday was a lay day, much to the disappointment of Bill Jansen, who had brought down his famous boat to once again try the fickle waters of Bass Strait. This was not to be. I am starting to feel that Bill is as lucky for the Club at Tidal River, as our old jinx, Des Williams.

Sunday was not brilliant, but certainly diveable. First dive was okay and some said brilliant. I guess it depended where the boat anchor dropped in. The second dive was on Great Glennie, at a spot that Mick and I thought showed no promise at all. After assurances from Jenny Large and Sally Staddon, we dropped in to a dive that lead us through a myriad of underwater caverns and swim throughs for the entire dive. It was definitely something to rave about, and we know exactly where it is for next time.

Apart from diving, we had just a few other moments to remember. John Lawler had his 29th birthday celebration. (I suspect there are some he forgot to celebrate). The ranger thought that singing "Happy Birthday" eleven times was a little excessive.

Neville Viapree appeared to be risking starvation - unable to get a feed. I found out later that this ploy earned Neville about 5 main meals each night in various tents. Then he washes it down with Navy Rum - overproof. Perfect when Neville does not have to drive home.

And our man Tipping was sporting the latest in Jayco pop top caravans. A great advancement from roughing it in Africa, Tony. There is obviously money in the Tipping family, proved when Marcus informed me that he had found 20 Easter eggs.

To his credit, old Tone gave me a lot of help in organizing tank fills. Without Tony chasing people, it wouldn't have happened.

I used to try to put my tent where there were not too many kids waking up early. Wrong. I camped next to the Jeacles, and can the old Mick snore. I lay awake all night thinking that a freight train was about to come barrelling through my tent.

To Mick's credit, I like the way he gets rid of guests who overstay their welcome.

I also met Andy Mastrowicz's mum, who told me that she won't let Andy go camping without her until he's just a little bit older. After all, some children get lost at Tidal River.

It was good to see some new faces at Tidal, like Ruth and Marita. Ruth has learned a little about picking tents. Marita has also made a good tent acquisition. If she had asked the Club we could have loaned her one just like it.

Again I got caught talking to Judy Hennike about the meaning of life, late at night. Despite my assurance to her that I am basically a very shallow person, I tried to understand (infact standing at all is an achievement at that hour) protection of societies morals, the hitchhikers guide to the galaxy and Club safety procedures. When Judy moved on to the sexual plight, oppression and physical agony of the women in Africa, I lost bulk points on the basis of apathy. So I stumbled over tent ropes and passed out on my half blown up lilo.

Well Easter has passed for 1991. Two days diving must give me a pass score.*

V.S.A.G.

presents

MARITIME HISTORIAN JACK LONEY

with another of his wonderfully entertaining talks about our rich maritime history. This time Jack will present:-

"THE SEA WAR IN BASS STRAIT"

DATE: Sunday 14th July, 1991 at 2.00 p.m.

VENUE: "The Cellar",
The Royal Hotel,
34 King Street,
Queenscliff.

For those of you who would prefer to drive to Sorrento and take the ferry to Queenscliff, the fare is \$10.00 return without your car. Once at Queenscliff you will have about a 1.5 km. walk up through the shopping centre in the main street to the Royal Hotel at the top of town. A counter lunch will be available. Tea and coffee will be served after Jack's talk, in time for you to take the last ferry back to Sorrento at 5.00 p.m.

FERRY TIMETABLE IS:

Departs Sorrento	8.00 a.m.	Departs Queenscliff	1.00 p.m.
	10.00 a.m.		3.00 p.m.
	12.00 Noon		5.00 p.m.

For those who do not wish to use the ferry and walk, one can drive to Queenscliff.

We are counting on all members supporting this Winter entertainment and of course all the family and friends are welcome. Please advise Des Williams at the June Meeting how many will be in your party.

Jack is a very popular speaker and is giving us some of his very valuable time at no charge.*

CORONERS INQUEST ON DIVING DEATHS

In the April/May issue of Fathoms we included a letter from Sant Khan, commenting on the findings of the Deputy State Coroner's inquest into diving deaths.

In this issue we include the Deputy State Coroner's reply and also her comments and recommendations.





STATE
CORONER
VICTORIA

State Coroner's Office
57-83 Kavanagh Street
South Melbourne 3205
Telephone: (03) 648 4444
(All Hours)
Toll Free: (008) 136 852
(Only Country Victoria)
Fax: (03) 629 1206

12th April, 1991

Dr Sant Khan
3/4 Wall Street
RICHMOND 3121

Dear Dr Khan,

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the scuba diving inquests I conducted last year. I am glad to hear your committee has been reassured by my recommendations.

A number of commercial scuba-diving groups were represented at the inquests, and my reference to the use of private boats resulting in a reduction of safety was made in a response to submissions from those groups. However, both the submission and my comment carried the implication that it would have been the loss of commercial operators with expertise and a measure of accountability, that would have created a vacuum in the sport of scuba-diving. There was no intention to criticize the use of private boats per se, and I regret that inference.

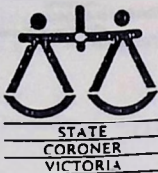
Indeed, I note your comments about the good safety record of private diving clubs and the attention they give to safety procedures.

Thank you for your interest.

Yours sincerely,

WENDY WILMOTH,
DEPUTY STATE CORONER.

For a copy of Sant Khan's letter to the Coroner - see Fathoms April/May.



State Coroner's Office
 57-63 Kewington Street
 South Melbourne 3205
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7th December, 1990

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In these inquests I have made findings concerning the deaths of three persons who died whilst scuba-diving, and a fourth person who, whilst a qualified scuba-diver, was snorkelling when he died. However, lessons which can be learned, and recommendations which can be made, have some aspects which are common to all four situations. I have considered evidence given to the inquests and a number of documents which have been tendered and have also heard submissions.
2. Scuba-diving as a sport is self-regulated and differs from commercial scuba-diving in that different practices prevail. Certain risks are eliminated or reduced in commercial scuba-diving, but these risks remain as choices to be taken by sportsmen or women. Courses of training have been devised, and practices and guidelines have been developed over the years which together regulate the sport.
3. It is recognised by the community that an obligation exists to provide some protection, perhaps in the form of guidelines, for divers whether they be new and inexperienced, or well qualified and experienced. To date that protection has been provided by self-regulation, so that participants in the sport will, ideally, gain knowledge and understanding of the risks involved.
4. It has been submitted to me that any recommendations I make should be directed towards the continuation of that framework, rather than towards regulation by Act of Parliament. This is because the existence of mandatory requirements might have the result of driving out diving operators through expense which might be disproportionate in an industry where the margins are narrow. Resort to the use of private boats for diving might then be had, resulting in reduction of safety.
5. For these reasons an industry developed Code of Practice would be superior to legislation, for the continued development and enhancement of safety aspects of the sport. It may be possible for the Ministry of Sport and Recreation to be involved in the development of such a

Code of Practice, in providing a focus for the various groups and the Police Search and Rescue Squad, but also groups who are involved in the Australian Standards Committee's current discussion of safety issues, a number of which are common to those which have arisen from these inquests.

6. A considerable number of issues have arisen, both directly and indirectly from the inquests, and these have in some instances given rise to recommendation. I have isolated these issues, with brief comment, and where appropriate, my recommendation. In each case the recommendation shall be directed to a body to consider a Code of Practice and to the Australian Standards Committee.

(i) Self-regulation

For the reasons I have stated this is preferable to legislation and my recommendation is that a Code of Practice be developed within the industry with the involvement of the Ministry of Sport and Recreation.

(ii) Medical examination of divers

The deaths of Andrew Mairs and Patrick Henderson raised the issue of medical examination. It is my recommendation that consideration be given to a requirement that, prior to commencing a course of instruction, students should be certified medically fit by a qualified doctor with knowledge of diving medicine, as laid down by the South Pacific Underwater Medicine Society.

This is a superior method to the filling in of a form by the trainee because it allows for the detection of contra-indicating medical conditions.

(iii) Qualifications from outside Victoria

The death of Patrick Henderson raised the issue of a diver having been trained in warm waters and subsequently diving in cold Victorian waters without any precautions being taken or consideration being given to possible risks.

It is my recommendation that consideration be given to a requirement that scuba divers qualified outside the area they wish to dive, be assessed as to their capability to dive in Victoria.

(iv) Ascent Protocol

Priorities for safety emphasise the role of buddy breathing as an emergency procedure. In relation to the deceased Moffat and Dimitrakis, buddy breathing was engaged in when each of the deceased experienced breathing difficulties in combination with nitrogen

narcosis. Probably the buddy divers in each case also suffered nitrogen narcosis, and this contributed to the inability of the two pairs to buddy-breathe successfully.

It is my recommendation that consideration be given to the re-ordering of priorities in current ascent protocols, to take account of the buddy breathing difficulties noted in these inquests and to re-assess advice which could be given to trainees as to the alternative emergency procedure of ascending in preference to buddy breathing.

(v)

The death of Andrew Mairs raised the issue of snorkelling above.

It is my recommendation that consideration should be given to a requirement that snorkellers, like scuba-divers, should dive in pairs.

(vi) Octopus regulators

One of the buddy divers involved in these inquests did not have an octopus regulator which could be used as a secondary air supply either by himself or his buddy diver. I understand that this issue is already under consideration by the Standards Committee. It is my recommendation that all divers be required to have an octopus regulator or other appropriate secondary air supply.

(vii) Stand-by Divers

The issue of whether a stand-by diver should be available on a commercial dive boat arises in the context of the buddy system.

The buddy system has been devised partly to provide the protection a stand-by diver would provide. The desirability of a stand-by diver being available comes into play in circumstances where the buddy system breaks down and fails to protect the divers.

There are considerations of practicality and expense to be considered relating to this issue and I make no recommendation concerning it. As an issue it forms part of my findings, comments and recommendations. Attention should be given to it during the formulation of any Code of Practice which may result from these inquests.

(viii) Cautioning divers

It is generally agreed sound practice that divers are cautioned by either divemaster or skipper before diving, of various hazards, although the more experienced the diver, the less attention might be given to such cautioning.

Hazards to be the subject of cautions might include hyperventilating during snorkelling, the increasing risk at depth of decompression sickness and nitrogen narcosis, the need to be slightly positively buoyant at the surface, and the need to turn cylinder valves on fully before diving, checking the air flow by observing the contents gauge while purging the regulator.

The responsibility of the divemaster or skipper, or in the case of a training course, the instructor, to remind divers of these hazards is a matter which should form part of the discussions involved in the formulation of a Code of Practice, as should a requirement to give an adequate dive brief before the dive, and to check the divers' equipment before they enter the water.

Other responsibilities of the divemaster or skipper which I include in this recommendation cover the need for dives to be logged and the information kept, and that the final decision on the ability of the diver, on the day, to carry out the dive, should be the responsibility of the boat skipper or the accompanying instructor.

(ix) Ascent line

In the case of the deceased Moffat, a spare cylinder of air with a regulator was attached to an anchor line for the use of a diver who might become short of air. It is my recommendation that consideration be given to a requirement that an appropriately weighted and buoyed ascent line be used on all dives to 30 metres or deeper, and that at least one full cylinder (of at least 400 litre capacity) with a properly functioning regulator should be attached to the line by an easily removed clip. The cylinder could be positioned at the bottom of the line or at the position of a decompression stop, or both.

(x) Ratio of students to instructor

I understand that the Standards Committee has agreed on a ratio of eight students to one instructor, but six students in less optimal weather. I understand that diving groups prefer a ratio of 6:1 in any event. In the case of the deceased Moffat, the ratio of 7:1 presented difficulties of supervision. Such a ratio is not ideal, even in optimal weather conditions, and with experienced divers. Even though this issue has been discussed by the Standards Committee very recently, it remains an issue which deserves attention. It is my recommendation that further consideration should be given to an appropriate ratio during the formulation of a Code of Practice. It is my view that such a discussion necessarily involves the related issue of an instructor keeping students in sight and easy reach throughout a dive, and consideration should be given to such a requirement.

(xi) Log Books and Documentation of Qualifications

The keeping of log books by divers assists shop proprietors and dive organisers to assess a diver's suitability for a particular dive. This, together with documentations as to a diver's qualifications is the information needed to assess a diver when the diver is unknown to the organiser.

It is my recommendation that consideration be given to a requirement that dive charter operators should not accept divers who have had insufficient training, qualifications and experience for the dive, and that this information should also be produced to the skipper before divers depart for any dive.

(xii) Resuscitation training and the provision of oxygen equipment

I understand that the Standards Committee has agreed to a standard requiring oxygen equipment capable of delivering at least 90% oxygen to be available on all dive charter boats. This is also my recommendation.

An extension of such a requirement would be the training of dive leadership personnel in resuscitation and first aid, and the administration of oxygen. I recommend that consideration be given as to the means of ensuring that such assistance is always available on a dive boat.

(xiii) Police Search and Rescue Squad

It has emerged from these inquests that advantages are to be had in assigning responsibility to the Victoria Police Search and Rescue Squad for the investigation and subsequent preparation of the Inquest Brief.

It is my recommendation that this should occur. A related matter of importance is the current prohibition on police rescue divers diving beyond a depth of 20 metres. From evidence I have heard it would seem reasonable to alter this prohibition to a depth of 50 metres, in order to enable rescue divers to effect the rescue or recovery of divers, bodies or evidence at that maximum depth. It is my recommendation that this alteration be made.

(xiv) The Equipment Specialist Course

This is a course for the trained diver, designed to familiarise the diver with the workings of his or her equipment, and to alert the diver to the need to maintain it, and to have it serviced regularly by trained technicians.

There is a strong case for concluding that the name of the course is misleading, despite the sound and appropriate content of the course. I recommend that the

name of the course be changed to reflect its nature, that of imparting basic maintenance information and skills, and in such a way as to de-emphasise specialisation.

(xv) Service of Equipment

The inadequate performance of diving equipment played a significant role in the deaths of the deceased Dimitrakis and Moffat.

It is clear that divers should have their equipment regularly inspected and serviced by an appropriately qualified service technician.

The provision of metal tagging providing evidence of up-to-date servicing would assist buddy divers and dive boat personnel in assessing the suitability of equipment, and the absence of such information at the time of a dive could alert all concerned to the possibility of sub-standard performance.

I recommend that consideration be given to the practicality of such a scheme.

I shall forward copies of my findings and recommendations to the Attorney-General for distribution to the Ministry of Sport and Recreation and to all relevant concerned bodies, including The Standards Committee CS/83, Recreational Underwater Diving, and the Chief Commissioner of Police.

Wendy Wilmoth

WENDY WILMOTH,
DEPUTY STATE CORONER.

MINUTES OF S.D.F.-V. MEETING - 2ND APRIL, 1991

by Des Williams

CLUBS PRESENT: Bottom Scratchers, B.R.U.D.G., Dive Experience, V.S.A.G., Marlin, LaTrobe Valley, M.R.G., A.P.I., B.S.A.C. and M.D.G.

- (a) Proposed Dinner Dance for 1991 has been put into abeyance, and delegates were asked for any other ideas which could involve member clubs in a social get-to-together.
- (b) Full discussion of impending Incorporation of the S.D.F.-V. was deferred until the next meeting.
- (c) The S.D.F.-V. has investigated the cost of advertising in "Dive Log" and "Scuba Diver" magazines and found this form of promotion to be beyond its financial reach. We are now to investigate the possibility of obtaining a grant of money for advertising from the Ministry for Recreation.
- (d) A short report on a recent Victorian Recreational Fisheries Advisory Committee (V.R.F.A.C.) meeting was presented. The good news was that there were no items which adversely effected us as divers at that meeting.
- (e) Dive seminars are regularly held by the Royal Adelaide Hospital's Hyperbaric Unit as a public relations exercise. Any club wishing to attend such informative seminars at any time can contact the hospital direct for further information on (08) 224 5116.
- (f) A new group of recreational fishermen have formed, calling themselves "VICFISH", as a lobby group on future Government policy.

- (g) The "Snapper Fighting Fund" has contacted S.D.F.-V. seeking diver assistance to install artificial reefs planned at Altona, Mornington and Black Rock. S.D.F.-V. will endeavour to have a representative of S.F.F. at its next meeting to enlarge further on their plans for artificial reefs.
- (h) All positions on the S.D.F.-V. management cell were declared vacant (Annual General Meeting) and elections held established the following office bearers for 1991/92:-
 - Darren Salter - Communications & Chairman (A.P.I. - Club)
 - Priya Cardinaletti - Commercial (Bottom Scratchers)
 - Adrian Panow - Statutory (Marine Research Group)
 - George Pollack - Public Relations (Marine Dive Group)
- (i) It was noted that 1991 is S.D.F.-V.'s 30th year, and discussion on how best to celebrate this occasion will be held at the next general meeting.
- (j) Next meeting to be held on Tuesday 4th June, 1991.

For any further details on the above report, please contact Des Williams on 551 3201 at home.*

LOST AT TIDAL RIVER

50 feet of 16mm. rope with eye splice at each end, used for trailer retrieval!

Would any member who might have finished up with this rope, please return it to Ross Luxford.

HISTORIC SHIPWRECKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

FRIDAY 5TH APRIL, 1991 - GEELONG.

by Des Williams

ITEMS OF INTEREST

"WILLIAM SALTHOUSE" Wreck exhibition is planned for November 1991. Items which have been recovered from the wreck and have received conservation treatment will be on display. Other interpretation material and a shipwreck model will also be on show. More details soon . . .

A thesis has been produced by Peter Morgans on the bottles from this wreck. In the next issue of the Victoria Archaeology Survey Newsletter there will be an article about contents analysis and development of techniques carried out by V.A.S. Conservator, Margaret Baron, on bottles recovered from the "WILLIAM SALTHOUSE".

Further analysis of bones from the meat cargo of this vessel is to be conducted by Tony English from Sydney University.

"CITY OF LAUNCESTON" Wreck: During April, visiting corrosion scientist Dr. Ian McLeod from Western Australia, will demonstrate underwater corrosion monitoring techniques to V.A.S. staff on the wreck site. This will assist with future management of the site. Dr. McLeod gave a short talk, after the H.S.A.C. Meeting, about his work in marine archaeology in Western Australia, and the effect of depth and water turbulence on the corrosion process of various metals.

For further details contact Des Williams on 551 3201.*