

FATHOMS

Registered for posting as
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Reg. No. VBH 2101

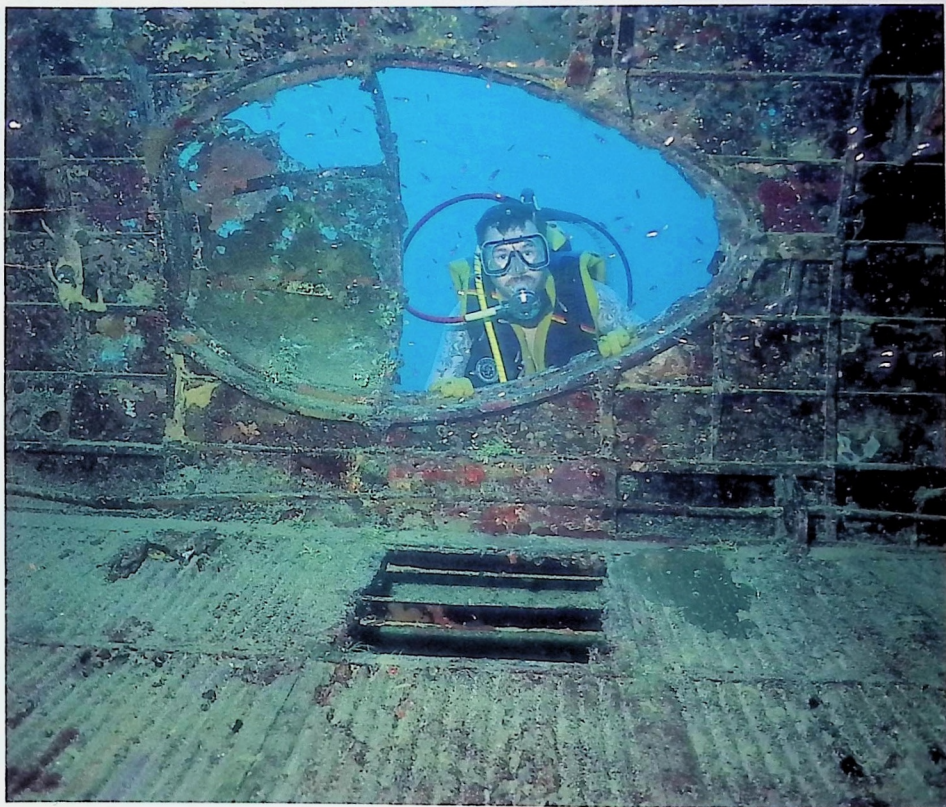
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Safety in Diving

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VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

APR - MAY 93

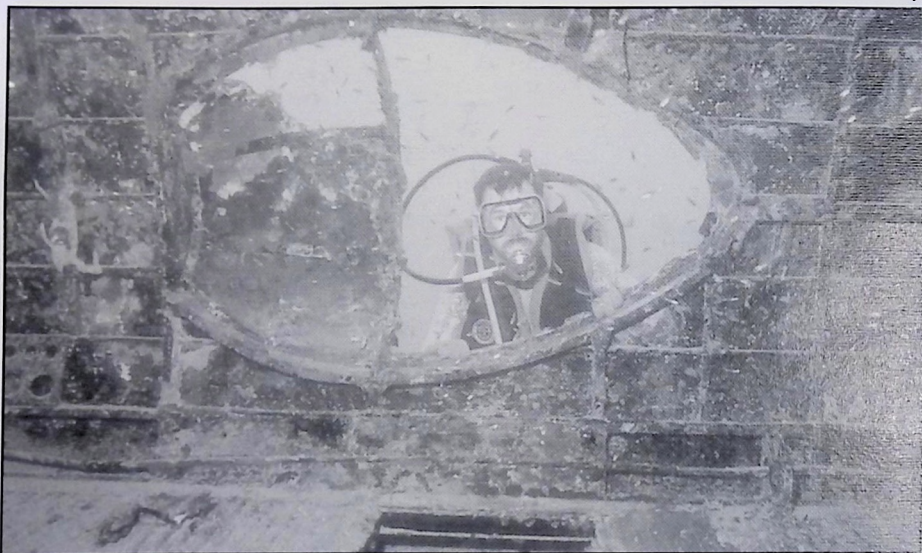
VSAG

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

These magnificent photographs are all examples of Des Williams' work taken on the VSAG trip to Truk Lagoon 1990.

I am sure you will agree that they are all outstanding, so good in fact that I couldn't decide what to keep or reject, so I've used the back cover as well and reproduced them all.

*Yours in Diving,
Alex Talay*



Front Cover:

Chris Llewellyn at Port-Side Gun Port. Betty Bomber Wreck. Truk Lagoon.

Back Cover:

1. Alex Talay with Ships Telegraph inside bridge of "Nippo Maru" Truk Lagoon.
2. Chris Llewellyn with lamp on "Nippo Maru" Truk Lagoon.

3. Chris Llewellyn on bridge of "Nippo Maru" Truk Lagoon.
4. Stern of "Gosei Maru" Truk Lagoon, divers from left to right: Neil Medhurst, Justin Liddy, Pat Reynolds & Bob Scott (standing), Ross Luxford, Andy Mastrowicz (back)
5. Alex Talay inside fuselage of Betty Bomber Truk Lagoon.
6. Stern mast of "Gosei Maru". Truk Lagoon divers left to right Chris Llewellyn, Alex Talay, Justin Liddy, Pat Reynolds and Neil Medhurst.

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 independent 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 in 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 20th May 8.00pm
Thursday 17th June 8.00pm
North Melbourne Football Club
Fogarty Street, North Melbourne
Meet beforehand at club for dinner

Next Committee Meetings:

20th April - Sant Khan's place
25th May - John Lawler's place

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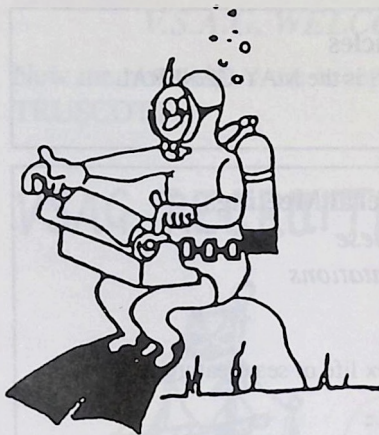
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EDITORIAL



With this issue of Fathoms we have been fortunate in having so many articles submitted that I am holding two over until next edition. Thank you to everyone who has contributed.

In April and May we shall have more guest speakers at our general meetings and on the 4th July we shall be treated to a very special presentation by well known maritime historian Jack Loney. This presentation will once again be down at Queenscliff and Des Williams will give us further details about venues and times.

In this issue I have taken some self-indulgence by writing about myself, or more precisely my left ear. The purpose in doing this is to bring to your greater awareness the EASE of causing permanent damage to your hearing through diving. I suppose most divers have on occasions experienced equalising problems, so I hope you will take heed from my experience.

On a more sombre note, we have also included the main findings from the Coroners Report into the death of a diver at Wilsons Promontory in April of last year.

A combination of lack of planning, poor and inadequate equipment, lack of training and common sense, over exertion and sea conditions contributed to the man's death. The report reinforces the values held by V.S.A.G for safety in diving. - It is everyone's responsibility.

In recent times, Pat Reynolds and John Lawler have each turned 50 and we congratulate both members for their continued active involvement in V.S.A.G.

John Goulding
Editor

NOTICE

Fathoms Articles

The deadline for the next issue of FATHOMS is the MAY GENERAL MEETING (20th May)

Guest Speakers at General Meetings

*Don't Miss These
Interesting Presentations*

15th April

Reg Lipson will give a presentation on the sex life of sea creatures.

20th May

Ron Prendegast - the Seal Curator at Melbourne Zoo will talk about seals.

Air Fills - Refuge Cove Please Note

The list of air fills at Refuge Cove appears to have been lost.

Would members who had fills please pay the Treasurer \$5.00 per fill.

In total there were 25 - 27 fills over the weekend.

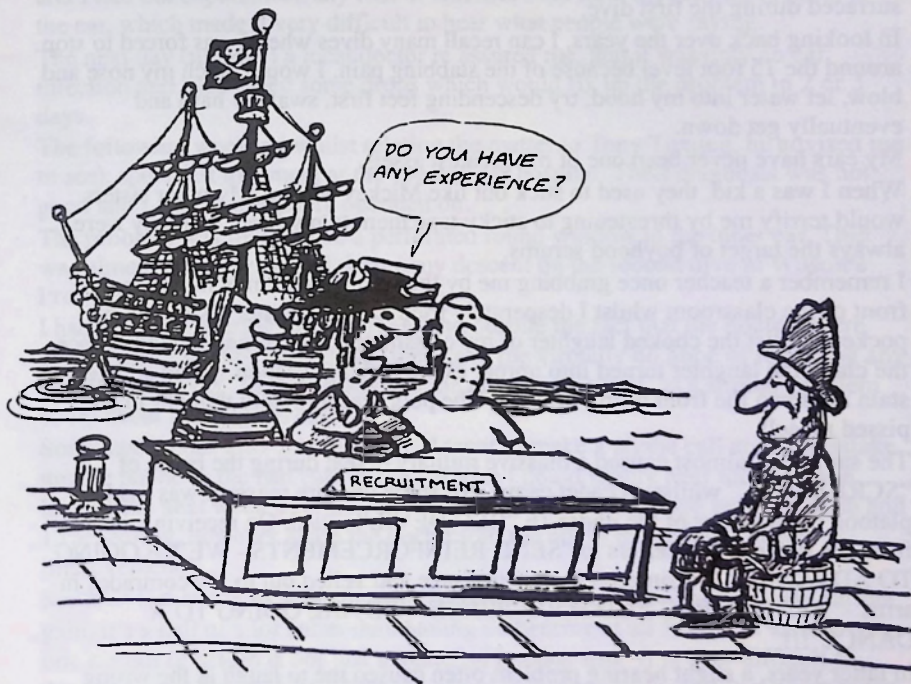
Thank you
John Goulding

NOTICE

V.S.A.G. WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

New memberships were accepted for DAVID WARD and CRAIG TRUSCOTT

VSAG RECRUITMENT OFFICE



TO HEAR OR NOT TO HEAR

JOHN GOULDING

Having been diving for over 20 years, I have become accustomed to experiencing the occasional ear squeeze during descent. My remedy for this discomfort was to ascend a little and try to equalise. Sometimes this was more difficult to achieve than at other times, but on only one or two dives did I have to abort because of not being able to clear my ears.

I had also noticed over the years that I was more likely to experience this problem on the second dive of the day, or on the second descent, if for some reason I had surfaced during the first dive.

In looking back over the years, I can recall many dives when I was forced to stop around the 15 foot level because of the stabbing pain. I would pinch my nose and blow, let water into my hood, try descending feet first, swallow hard and eventually get down.

My ears have never been one of my greatest assets.

When I was a kid, they used to stick out like Mickey Mouse. My older sisters would terrify me by threatening to sticky tape them to my head, and they were always the target of boyhood scums.

I remember a teacher once grabbing me by the ear and marching me up to the front of the classroom whilst I desperately tried to stuff a water pistol into my pocket, amidst the choked laughter of my classmates. As I turned around to face the class, the laughter turned into uproar as the leaking weapon spread a huge stain all down the front of my trousers. The poor teacher really thought I had pissed myself.

The same ears almost caused a massive military defeat during the battle of "SCRUB HILL" whilst on cadet camp. For some obscure reason I was made platoon commander of the under 16 "RED DEVIL" squad. On receiving a signal from the battle headquarters to "SEND REINFORCEMENTS - WE'RE GOING TO ADVANCE" I misinterpreted the message and yelled out to my comrades in arms - "SEND THREE AND FOUR PENCE - WE ARE GOING TO A DANCE"!!!

In latter years, a slight hearing problem often caused me to laugh at the wrong times and mistake names by calling:-

FRED - TED, JENNY - PENNY, MICK - DICK and ANNIE - FANNY .

Sometimes after flying I would walk around for days with a feeling as if I had water in both ears. This would be accompanied by ringing in the ears which made my own voice echo inside my head everytime I spoke. So there didn't appear to be anything terribly unusual on my second dive on Sunday 31st January at Wilson's Promontory, when after completing the dive my left ear seemed full of water.

I really didn't notice any hearing loss, only the discomfort in the ear, which I tried to cure by hopping and jumping around on one foot hoping to dislodge the water. By the next night the discomfort was quite annoying. Whilst there was no pain, and I had not experienced any loss of balance, I did have a continual ringing in the ear, which made it very difficult to hear what people were saying.

The next day (tuesday) a local doctor re assured me, that it was only an ear infection and subscribed some drops which would fix up the problem in 2 or 3 days.

The following weekend whilst relating the matter to Tony Tipping, he advised me to seek specialist treatment at the eye and ear hospital. Their diagnosis was not good and I was immediately operated on.

The problem was found to be a perforated round window in the inner ear. This was almost certainly caused during my descent on the second dive at Wilson's Promontory.

I had lost total hearing in my left ear and despite the fact that the doctors were able to mend the tiny membrane, they gave me virtually no hope of regaining any hearing in the ear. They also advised me not to dive again, as a similar problem could occur in my good ear.

Some two weeks after the operation, I went to make a phone call and by mistake put the phone to the bad ear. To my surprise I could faintly hear the dial tone. During the next week a further test confirmed that I'd regained between 10% and 15% hearing, however again the doctor told me not to expect any further improvement.

My next test is due in May, and although I don't think there has been any further gain, it's a hell of a lot better than having no hearing at all from that ear. Having one ear out of action is not just a matter of hearing loss. It is very difficult to determine the direction of where the sound is coming from, and in a noisy room it's almost impossible to "listen intelligibly" to what someone is saying.

During that second dive I had 2 ear squeezes ; one at about 10-15 feet, and the other at about 25 feet. On both occasions I was able to equalise but obviously blew out the round window in the process. I completed the dive without any further problem. There was no giddiness or loss of balance and no further pain. Maximum depth on the dive was 90 feet and the ascent was slow and gradual, with the dive being completed within the no-decompression time limit.

The fact that a period of 8 days elapsed between damage and operation probably had no bearing on the result.

The ear is a highly sensitive and intricate organ which doesn't take kindly to abuse.

Perhaps I had forgotten that Tony Tipping had suffered a similar problem 10 or 12 years ago. Perhaps I was unaware that the ear squeeze was a warning to be heeded. Perhaps I had become accustomed to having "ear problems" when diving.

My advice to others is to pay greater attention to this aspect of your diving. If you have experienced ear squeeze problems, seek expert attention and don't exert undue pressure to clear your ears.

I have decided to hang up the flippers for a while and will review my future diving activity in September.

NOTICE

WARM WATER DIVING MAY 1994

2 WEEK OVERSEAS TRIP

- 1WEEK WRECKS & REEF IN THE SOLOMOMS
- 1 WEEK ON THE PRESIDENT COOLRIDGE AND OTHER DIVES IN VANUATU.

THIS TRIP IS CENTRED AROUND THE BEST WRECK DIVE IN THE WORLD - THE PRESIDENT COOLIDGE.

INTERESTED?
CONTACT DON ABELL FOR DETAILS.

VSAG CHRISTMAS TRIP 1993/94

MICK JEACLE

Victoria's "Wild" East is still largely a Snowy River Wilderness, blanketed with deep forests, where the legendary waterway, celebrated in poem and film, comes to a quiet end at an almost pristine coastline just as untouched as the hinterland.

I speak of course of the Orbost area, Which also takes in Marlo, and the seaside area of Cape Conran, the destination for this coming Christmas Trip.

Whilst it is realised that this is a departure from the norm, that is a relatively large interstate town, your committee feels that a local Victorian destination would appeal to more members in these harsh economic times.

Now a little about the area :

At Marlo, the Snowy River flows gently into a large lagoon backed up by a steep bluff and cuts an outlet channel through a sandy barrier to it's meeting with the sea.

Marlo was once a busy port where passengers from Melbourne disembarked to refresh themselves before going on to Orbost by boat or horsedrawn carriage.

Now this tourist resort offers a well equipped base for holiday makers.

Cape Conran, situated some 18km from Marlo, is a rocky peninsula with sandy beaches and a carpet of sheltered bushland.

The offshore fishing is excellent, and the abundant marine life makes the cape a rewarding venue for scuba divers. Walking and canoeing are also popular.

THE CARAVAN PARK

Burbang Adventure Caravan Park is set in 185 Acres of natural bush, and is an ideal setting for a restful holiday.

It has tennis courts, swimming pool , playground area etc and the shop carries a wide range of goods including petrol and bait. I am assured that we will also have use of a freezer for our daily catch, to ensure we can also bring home some of the "spoils" of the sea.

VSAG has has booked 12 powered grassy sites, and more are available should we require them.

Shopping can be done at nearby Orbost, where I believe 2 supermarkets exist. Other necessities such as butcher, baker etc are also situated at Orbost.

A picture theatre at Marlo shows all the latest movies, and the local pub puts on a fair counter meal. No doubt restaurants can be found at Orbost for those who wish to go upmarket.

THE DIVING

Diving is mainly centred around Beware reef, some 5 kilometres or so from the Cape Conran ramp. There are 3 wrecks on this reef for us to explore. The diving is very colorful, and the prospect of taking home the odd cray is very strong indeed. I shall endeavour to find out as much as I can about the popular dive sites over the next few months, and indeed no doubt we shall find some of our own.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Bushwalking, canoeing and water skiing are very popular in the area. Add trips to the high country, four wheel driving for those so equipped, and visits to areas such as The Buchan Caves, Errinundra and Snowy River National Parks, and Mallacoota. I am sure there is something for everyone here, as there are a number of options which can be organised for all to enjoy on the day that we do not dive. A deposit of \$20.00 per site will secure your place. Come on, be in it. Call me now and reserve your site.

THE MORAL DILEMA OF REFUGE COVE

DON ABELL

Australia Day 1993 saw the annual VSAG pilgrimage to Refuge Cove. Most people who have been fortunate enough to get Refuge Agree that it is the "Eden" of Wilson's Promontory and perhaps farther afield.

Of course most of those people have been to Refuge during the absence of VSAG.

As we navigated the Old Rosalia out of the Franklin River on Saturday morning our trusty dive captain for this weekend Mr John Goulding who has reluctantly confessed to having a body of the same name, confided in me, a few of his most important concerns about the weekend. John has noticed that over the last few years (about 17 to be accurate) The moral fibre of the group has been gradually recessing.

John is concerned that some of the VSAG members have been imbibing a little to much, telling bawdy and unsavoury tales to other members, causing a disturbance in the confines of a national park dedicated to the environment and it's natural tranquillity and generally putting the good name of keen divers into disrepute.

This of course is the value of the senior and more experienced and in this case life members of this club. John has been able to sense and identify the subtleties of the situation that no other member of the club has picked up. This is perhaps a good thing as I am sure that, if previously highlighted, this problem could have caused a fall in the number of regular Refuge attendees until the weekend was no longer viable as a club trip.

To try and correct this problem before it was noticed by others. John appointed me as morals monitor for the weekend. I could tell immediately that this was a big task so I sought a deputy. The obvious person was Justin Liddy. Of course, astute as Justin is, he had anticipated his calling. He had left his dive gear at home so that he would be able to concentrate on the issues at hand.

I had hoped that Paul Sier would be available as a second deputy but he had missed the boat. A great shame and an opportunity missed.

Paul has the ability to blend into any group in a low key manner and observe his surroundings without being noticed. Paul's quiet and unobtrusive manner would have been invaluable rounding out the trouble makers in the group.

At the end of the weekend my observations of the group were as follows: -My cover was possibly blown because this was the lowest key trip in years

- I was knocked out on Saturday night and was pleased to hear that Mick Jeacle immediately took over with J Liddy and led the group in Hymn singing to exorcise the bad elements.

- I also appreciate Mick's support by not telling "Archibald" on Sunday night. Not that I think "Archibald" is in any form of bad taste, however it may incite the evil of others.

- Chris Lewellyn also tried to maintain a higher level in the conversation by discussing the future Prime Ministers of the country. (and other misconceptions)

- Charlie Brincatt was a positive influence as always by sleeping through the whole weekend.

- Bill Hayes credentials are of course unquestionable. As a Bank Manager and J.P. He is a pillar of the society and could be relied upon to uphold the highest standards.
 - I have always known that Mick Jackiw was not a trouble maker. Mick went to bed early. This was noticeable at a similar time to his friend Kate and her friend. What a happy trio.
 - I cannot be sure about Paul Tipping. He never seemed to be near when I was about, but as a Legal eagle and a man of repute and standing at the bar ,infact practically any bar in Melbourne
I am sure his standards are beyond question.
Which leads to the divers that may be of some concern like:
 - Leo Maybus How can I be sure of a man who can not find his tent amongst a group of about a dozen. A man who when he finally leaves the party to go to his tent (only 10 feet away) takes the long way home.
 - Murray Black who insisted on telling derogatory jokes about aussies without any provocation whatsoever
 - Jackie Paterson who insisted on goading otherwise innocent VSAG members and luring them into making sexist and discriminatory comments which were totally out of character.
 - Craig Truscott. Just like his old man is a real stirrer. He stayed awake until the last man dropped. Always pushing the controversial line.
 - Mick Large. He's a bikie ,What else do I need to say. We have all seen his type at demonstrations at Parliament house and in the city square. The professional trouble maker.
- And perhaps a few final observations:
- The past few Australia Day weekends have been for more debaucherous. Perhaps all the real trouble makers were absent this year. I won't name names but lets assign them the alias of say;-Ross Luxfold, Graeme Blanchard, Des Williams, Bob Scott.
- And I have a basic problem when the Ranger comes to settle down Yogi and his friends at 1.00 in the morning. How can we expect to take this discipline seriously when he turns up with a six pack in one hand.
- I am sure that Mr Goulding will continue this moral vigil into future Refuge Phenomenons.

SOLOMON SOJOURN

DON ABELL

This article is a follow - up on a story previously published on diving and fishing on the Great Barrier Reef. After leaving the reef I picked up my flight to Honiara. By the time this hits Fathoms my story should also have hit the April issue of Dive Log.

A week in Northern Queensland managed to remove the permafrost of a Victorian winter. When I met the rest of the Solomon Island divers at Brisbane Airport, we were keen to get to the South West Pacific and try some new under water sites. Most of the participants were from commercial concerns, dive shops, etc.

The flight to our destination was aboard the new Solomon Airlines Boeing 737-400. The airline took official delivery of this aircraft in April 1992 and it will fly the important routes to Australia and New Zealand. It has the appropriate name of GUADALCANAL- perhaps the most well known place name in the islands and the site of the most significant battles of World War 11.

Our trip included three dive destinations. We started at the distant location of Gizo and worked back to Honiara via the resort at UEPI (pronounced Oopy). At Honiara we transferred directly to a Twin Otter which was to take us to Gizo. These aircraft are known for there short takeoff and landing ability. This was comforting when I looked from the plane down on the island landing strips. From the air these strips look like they could be measured in feet and inches and there is only water to stop you at either end.

We were met at Gizo by Charlie Panakera, the Director of Gizo Hotel and Grant Griffiths from Dive Solomons, one of the two operators on the island. It was to late to dive so we retired to the hotel bar and dining room (both open air) and enjoyed a few cold beers and a barbeque of crayfish and reef fish. The superb food we enjoyed through the week would have made the trip worthwhile even without diving.

Our first dive was the wreck of Toa Maru, an intact passenger\cargo ship first launched in 1938, conscripted to the Imperial Navy in 1941 and sunk in 1943. The ship lies on it's starboard side in 18 to 40 meters and is perhaps the best

wreck dive in the Solomons.

We explored the holds which still contain ammunition, sake bottles, a motor bike and even a small tank. Our guide took us through the crew quarters and into the engine room. The only unfortunate part of the dive was that we only had time to dive it once. I could have easily made a second or third dive to fully appreciate this wreck.

Unfortunately its position means the water is never crystal clear, 67-70 ft visibility is normal on this wreck.

After a lunch of barbecued crayfish and steak on one of the islands we headed off to dive "Grand Central Station" named after the New York namesake because of the never ending prolific marine activity.

We dropped into the water when the current had all but stopped so conditions were not perfect but the fish life were still abundant. We were suspended in 20 meters and life went on around us as if we didn't exist. Even reef sharks gliding past seemed oblivious to our presence.

Dinner that night - you guessed it - crayfish, reef fish and an excellent ratatouille made by Danny Kennedy, the Director of Adventure Sports and the other dive operator on Gizo.

Gizo is a good dive location. Our short visit did not do the location justice. There are other wrecks and location drop offs we didn't have time to see. For those with extra time there are a number of culture tours to observe island life. Next year I plan to get another look at the Toa Maru.

Our next destination was Uepi Island Resort. The emphasis should be on the word "resort" because the place is certainly "away from it all". There is no visible human life within walking distance of the resort. Uepi is like a tropical oasis and the managers, Greg Stockdale and Sue Wilkes, ensure that your visit is enjoyable and with a feeling of James A Michener's "Adventures in paradise".

Diving is all on reefs, some which drop down into 600 meters or more. One great attraction is that the furthest dive site is only about a five minute boat trip from the resort. The closest dive is directly off the jetty. Greg also pointed out another advantage of distance- at the end of a days diving the jetty is a mere 30 second stroll from the bar.

Our first dive is at Elbow Point and the Landoro Drop Off/Coral Garden. Everytime we turned our heads there was something to titillate a cold water diver from Melbourne. On the reef a wonderland of soft and hard coral with an abundance of fish life of every type in a balanced ecosystem. Away from the wall we were treated to the slow motion passing of Devil rays and the ponderous paddling of a turtle.

Swimming with sharks seems to get the Adrenalin pumping in divers. Some other divers at the resort had sighted a school of Hammerhead sharks on the same day so we were looking out toward the blue abyss in the hope of seeing these unusually designed creatures. We were not in luck with Hammerheads but the sight of a large Leopard shark was adequate compensation. Both these sharks as well as the usual Reef sharks are a common sight at Uepi.

A dusk dive seemed an appropriate way to end our day. The highlight for me was a 4 meter diameter Gorgonian Fan. Certainly the largest I've ever seen. Greg told me after the dive that the fan had been 6 meters until an unobservant diver had finned through it and had caught one third of it on his scuba tank.

The life was diverse to that on our earlier dive. Large painted crays stood boldly on the ledges that offered no protection from a hungry diver. We had eaten more than enough crayfish so they remained untouched. Moray eels ventured out to watch us as we passed and a pulsating octopus, partly in his reef haven, looked like the major organ in open heart surgery.. Butterfly cod were in large numbers so it was advisable to keep our hands off the coral wall if not looking carefully where they were to be placed.

Uepi island is a small piece of paradise. I couldn't help feeling that this is a place to take a holiday and include diving as one of the activities rather than concentrate solely on diving. Uepi is located in the Morova Lagoon which plays host to rainforest walks, cultural trips to island villages, fishing, canoeing or simply lying on the beaches and regenerating your biological batteries. Everyone at Uepi is relaxed and friendly and smiling just comes naturally.

Our last stop was Honiara. This is a thriving metropolis when compared to the island charm of Gizo and the tranquil resort of Uepi. For a start a bus had to take us from the airport to our hotel and we were required to negotiate the traffic signals and one way streets. Gizo had a road, if you don't feel like walking, but

no motorised traffic to speak of. There are no roads or motor vehicles at Uepi - a factor I related as a major attraction.

Honiara is a place for both wreck and reef diving but it's diving fame is based, without doubt, on the close proximity of the submerged remnants of World War 11 carnage. The city looks out over Iron Bottom Sound, named in acknowledgement of about 40 ships from both sides which ceased their battle 50 years ago and now lie at rest under the depths.

Many of these ships are in deep water (below 40 meters) and would not be recommended diving even for experienced divers. The two dive operators, Dive Solomons and Island Dive Services concentrate principally on wrecks and reefs which are dived from the shore but either will arrange to dive some of the more inaccessible wrecks if you want. The depth of the off shore wrecks means that they are in good condition if you discount the odd bomb crater or torpedo hole.

Our first dive was on the Hirokawa Maru, otherwise known as Bonegi I. This is a 7000 tonne cargo ship which was no match for US dive bombers on 14 November 1942. It starts just off shore in 3 meters and continues down to 60 meters. A search of the hold at 40 meters uncovered remains of a small tank. Other holds had truck tyres, saki bottles and masses of ammunition but the proximity to shore has meant that this wreck has been well dived.

The wreck was so good that I requested to dive it again on the following day and like all good wreck dives I enjoyed it more the second time around.

But for me the highlight of this dive was the end when we moved serenely in 3-6 meters in decompression mode. The coral growth and fish life is exceptional. On each dive I spent at least 40 minutes in these depths and I was sorry to surface even then.

I saw the largest Nudibranc I have ever seen while gliding around the bow of this wreck. It would have bought tears to Des Williams'

eyes. I also saw the largest and smallest sea anemones and fish of remarkable beauty that I disappointingly couldn't identify, not having seen them before.

My admiration also goes to the numerous little fish of 5 to 10 cm which were determined to see me out of the territory with persistent nipping.

A week is a short time on the Solomon Islands. We experienced just three locations in a chain of more than 900 islands spread over 800,000 square kilo

meters of sea. The diving potential seems unlimited. For the divers who want to get to some more remote places there are a number of live abroad cruises which will take you for a week or more of diving in luxurious air-conditioned comfort and at a reasonable cost. Diving and living in the Solomon Islands is not an expensive pastime.

The venue has the history of Truk Lagoon but also some stunning reef diving. There is also the opportunity to vary the diving day. Perhaps the greatest attraction of this place is the Solomon Islanders themselves. The islanders are warm and naturally friendly people. The majority still live a predominantly island life on remote islands. The unselfish island values are still paramount. These people are genuine and not driven by the dollar. (tipping in Solomons is discouraged)

BOATS AND DIVING ETIQUETTE

JOHN LAWLER - SAFETY OFFICER

It is timely to reflect on how fortunate we VSAG members are to be in such a strong, well run private club and to have use of private boats provided for club purposes. Our boats are expensive and sizeable investments. The investment by owners is ours, which we are very anxious to maintain as well as possible, given the conditions.

Owners except as inevitable wear and tear, however needless scrapes, chips, dents and marks by unthinking crew is hard to live with.

VSAG boat owners are good enough to provide their boats for members diving pleasure and crew should be willing to properly assist with boat preparation, gear storage, launch and retrieval and general duties.

Generally this is true for most regular VSAG divers, but from time to time some of us lose sight of this and become involved in activities that do not include assisting the very people that make VSAG diving what it is.

There are some fundamentals associated with small boat diving, and when taken up will help greatly in the interests of more harmonious diving and happy boat owners.

1. When assigned to a boat you are part of a team. Help with the launch preparation during the owners absence, putting it back on the trailer, unloading and cleaning/washing it up.
 2. Arrive early and be prepared and be on hand, especially at launch time
 3. Stow your gear ie- all your diving gear, less weight belt, food containers etc.
 4. Bins buckets and the like take up too much space on small craft. If gear is not stowed compactly, it will spill out if conditions are rough and this could lead to damage - besides it's a bloody nuisance rolling around your feet.
 5. Gear up from your soft dive bag and immediately after entering the boat, from a dive undress into it. Don't leave your dive gear and catch lying all over the boat.
 6. Bring an old hessian catch-bag or similar to put your catch into. Do not rely on the boatowner to have one.
 7. When gearing up in rough conditions stay away from the outdoor motor. Be located in the centre of the boat - it's much safer.
 8. Offer to drop anchor or pull it up.
 9. Remove paper wrappings, drink cans, fruit peel from the boat with your gear.
 10. Have the correct dive fee contribution ready.
 11. Fill your tank before; not on the dive day. Early starts are delayed when this happens.
- All these points are basic to our diving from small boats and when put into practise we will leave a big smile on everyone's faces.

MARCH GENERAL MEETING

DON ABELL

As announced to members we were fortunate to have Barry Andrewatha speak to VSAG at the March General meeting. I would like to record the club's thanks to Bob Scott for organising Barry to be there. Or as Barry put it, for "blackmailing" him to be there.

Barry's name is synonymous with the dive world of Victoria. His name has been around for as long as I can remember. After speaking to him now I know why. Barry has been diving for 40 years, he started writing dive articles when he was

15. (Which I assume were for newspapers). He has now been editing for diving magazines for 24 years and is now currently the editor of Sport Diver and Dive Log.

Barry's talk was informal which is just as VSAG likes it. He had many slides to show us of some of his recent diving adventures. He had just returned from a diving trip off Florida where he swam with and photographed the Spotted Dolphin. These dolphins have been in the area for decades. (or longer) And are relaxed at having people swim around them.

Most of the water time was spent on snorkel. Scuba would make the diver too clumsy and unable to keep up with the dolphin which swim at around 2 to 3 knots in normal swimming. One Japanese diver was seen doing scuba but only to enable him to submerge and wait for photographic opportunities.

The photos shown by Barry were fabulous. I have not met a diver who would love to swim with dolphins. Maybe we need a trip to Florida.

Barry had also organised a trip to Southern Australia with Rodney Fox to find the elusive White Pointer Shark. Divers joined the expedition to see and photograph these magnificent creatures and again Barry had some great slides.

The sharks were baited and took between 2 and 24 hours to come around. These sharks are monsters and the underwater shots of these 16 foot/ 1.5 tonne specimens were awesome.

More interesting was the respect which Barry developed for the sharks. He told us how the sharks would put their head out of the water and look at the divers on the boat as they swam past.

The Jacques Cousteau team were also in the area and Barry was invited aboard. He told us how the French would stop for their three course lunch with wine irrespective of the level of shark activity. If the sharks dispersed during lunch the French would start over again.

Barry had many other beautiful underwater photographs from his collection. He also happily discussed his preferences for overseas...as destinations. - P.N.G, Indonesia and Malaysia.

We ended the night discussing dive gear and likely future developments.

We were privileged to have Barry address our March meeting.

CORONERS INQUEST

JOHN GOULDING

The following pages provide an extract of a recent Coroners report into a diving death. I had intended to try and summarise the main points as it is rather lengthy, however on reading the Coroners findings there is simply too much information that is relevant to the case.

Although VSAG does not generally use surface supplied "hookah" equipment there are a number of lessons to be learnt from this fatal incident.

I commend this extract for your reading.

I, Max Beck, Coroner

Find that death occurred on 9th April, 1992 at Wilson's Promontory from barotrauma in a diving incident in the following circumstances.

Gary James Leask was a 36 year old unemployed panel beater who was an experienced diver, and had probably successfully completed more than 200 dives before this incident. He owned his own scuba gear and dive computer.

He was fit, but not a strong, person of slim build. He had suffered from mild asthma since a child. He had apparently been passed as medically fit by a Doctor in New Zealand as a prerequisite for doing his dive course over there in 1983.

During two weeks prior to the incident Leask suffered from a slight sinus problem and a runny nose. Found in his carrybag was a Ventolin inhaler, Sudafed tablets, Drixine nasal spray and No Doz tablets.

The Airdive Pty Ltd Surface Supply Breathing Apparatus used to supply air to the divers was manufactured in May 1991. It was purchased secondhand by Geoff Allan more than a year beforehand and had not been serviced for 12 months. The condition of the compressor was generally poor with most non-stainless steel parts badly corroded. Due to the extent of the corrosion around the clamps that fixed the pipe to the engine., exhaust gases were noticeably leaking from the pipe connection which is situated very closely to the air filter intake. A test of an air sample supplied by this compressor indicated that at the time it was taken the level of carbon monoxide was twice the acceptable level as set down in

the Australian Standards 2299 of 1990. However the two surviving divers indicated no ill effects were experienced during the use of the compressor, which could be attributed to the bodily uptake of carbon monoxide gas. The divers were supplied air via a 78.5 meter single length of diving hose which then forked into separate lengths of hose 8.3 and 8.5 meters respectively. The air supply hose was attached to the divers by means of tying to the divers weight belt or weight harness with a "thumb" knot. This meant that if the diver got into difficulties he could not ditch his weight belt or harness without losing the air supply as well. On one occasion when Con Kyriazis decide to surface because he had a leaking mask the separation between he and the other diver caused the air hose to tug on his weight belt and undo it causing the belt to fall and the regulator to be torn from his mouth.

The diving clothes worn by the deceased Leask at the time of the death comprised a near new seven millimeter neoprene wetsuit with hood and booties, a pair of knitted cotton gloves and acceptable mask and fins in good condition. He also wore two weight belts. There is no doubt that Gary Leask would have been severely overweighted. An appropriate weight for a 56 kilogram person like Leask (particularly without any buoyancy control device) would have been around 9 kilograms. It appears he was carrying around 12 kilograms and perhaps a lot more. Neither Leask nor any of the other two divers wore buoyancy control devices. This is usual for divers operating on surface supply breathing apparatus. The deceased apparently had a sugar bag tied to his weight belt for use as a catch bag. This also was not found. It appears he did not wear a snorkel with his mask. Save for the following comments there is little point in endeavouring to try and analyse the dive profiles of the various dives undertaken by the deceased on that day due to the fact that the absence of any depth gauge or bottom time device (eg. watch) makes accurate analysis impossible. It is common ground that the deceased completed at least five dives before his death. After the second dive Mr Kyriazis thought the deceased looked tired. After the fourth dive Mr Allan commented that the deceased appeared "a bit stuffed" after pulling him into the boat, but still happy. At least one dive that the deceased did was estimated to be 50 or 60 feet.

The fatal dive occurred in a stretch of water between the southern tip of Great Glennie Island and a large rock outcrop about 60 meters off shore further to the south. This area is a marine reserve where the taking of fish, crayfish and abalone is prohibited.

At the time of the dive there were 15 knot south west winds with a 1 1/2 to 2 meter swell. These conditions were clearly hazardous. On this occasion the boat was anchored on the west side of the stretch of water described and the divers were pulled by the rip to the east. Visibility was 20-30 feet.

On this fifth and fatal dive Geoff Allan says he noticed, after some 20 minutes into the dive, a rip came up and he and the deceased were being pulled away from the boat underwater. It was the strongest current he had experienced so he signalled to Gary Leask to ascend and he acknowledged. Leask's progress to the surface was not observed by Allan who reached the surface before Leask. When Allan got to the surface he noticed it was a lot rougher. The current was very strong and he was scared. Allan motioned to Leask, who was now some 10 feet away, to start kicking towards the boat. At this point the divers were approximately 50 meters from the boat being buffeted by strong seas and stiff current. In such condition a more desirable method of exiting the water would have been to swim or crawl along the sea bottom and come up the anchor line of the boat. The reason this was not done was no doubt due to the inexperience of the divers.

In the boat Kyriazis tried valiantly to pull both divers in against the current by means of the air hose. Allan also commenced to pull himself in hand over hand along the air hose. When Allan got close to the back of the boat he saw the air hose attached to Leask going down. Allan had trouble getting into the boat because of the swell and current. He removed his mask and mouthpiece and looked to Leask who was now floating on the surface. Allan then jumped back into the water to get Leask but realised he was ill equipped with weight belt still on but without his mask and air supply. He returned to the boat and Kyriazis then donned a lifejacket and jumped after Leask. After having difficulties retrieving the anchor due to the hard current, Allan drove the boat to Kyriazis and Leask. At one point Leask was about 15 -20 feet from the boat and at that stage he became disconnected from his air line and drifted away.

Up to this stage Leask was floating on his back but he then turned over and floated facedown. When Kyriazis reached Leask he held his head out of water, his face mask was half full, he was foaming at the mouth and he was missing both weight belts. The buckshot abalone diver style weight belt was later discovered attached to the airhose which was tied to it. Leask's other weight belt has never been discovered to this day.

Once in the boat Allan tried to resuscitate Leask. Allan did not have a good knowledge of first aid, however he continued to resuscitate Leask for some twenty minutes applying what knowledge of the subject to the best of his ability. After having difficulties starting the boat the two surviving divers headed for Port Welshpool with Leask who they knew was beyond help. By this time the sea was very rough and as the boat was not handling conditions to well they could only go slow. Coming around the lighthouse they were scared for their own lives, conditions were that bad. By the time they got past the lighthouse it had started to get dark and they then had to motor approximately another 2 hours in the dark. After leaving Port Welshpool they drove past Toora with a police station and hospital, and Meeniyana with a police station on the highway and then drove to Leongatha 45 minutes away from Port Welshpool with the deceased in the boat. Both men were upset, depressed, disorientated, physically exhausted and not thinking straight. At Leongatha they reported to the hospital.

CAUSE OF DEATH

Gary James Leask was killed by a haemorrhage to the brain caused by barotrauma. This was brought about by air bubbles in the cerebral blood vessels. It is a medical fact that people with respiratory conditions such as Asthma are more susceptible to air embolism or barotrauma of this type. Gary Leask's respiratory condition probably contributed to his death.

In addition the following factors also contributed to his death :-

1. Failure to properly assess a dangerous dive site which was beyond the divers capability.
2. Being overweighted thereby causing the need for more exertion than would otherwise be required.

3. Insufficient or inadequate air supply during the dive. Normal practise would be for two independent air hoses to come from the compressor allowing for greater air flow with less resistance. The tying of the air hose by way of the "thumb knot" to the weight belt would have created more air resistance. The air supply itself contained twice the acceptable level of carbon monoxide.

4. The deceased was suffering from fatigue caused by the previous dives he had done that day and the fact he had little sleep the night before. This together with the extreme physical exertion he had to undergo to fight the current would have caused him to apply an increased respiratory effort thereby making him more susceptible to barotrauma with his respiratory condition.

5. The deceased, who was the most experienced diver and should have known better, totally failed to monitor his depth and bottom times over five dives in a relatively short period. This was an excessive number of dives for a sport diver to do on one day in these circumstances and greatly increase the risk factor of a diving accident. The more dives a diver does in one day the greater the risk.

6. Lack of training in the proper use of surface supply breathing apparatus was also the cause.

Although at the completion of the dive the buddy system should have been used so that both divers ascended and surfaced together, I am unable to say whether this would have made any difference to the outcome, given all the conditions that prevailed at the one time. Although a buoyancy vest is not normally used with a "hookah" breathing system such as the one used here, if it had been worn on this occasion it could have been inflated to support Leask on the surface either by him or for him.

The failure to have fitted to the boat a marine citizen's band radio meant that there was no possibility to radio assistance.

As to the diving generally I make the following comments.

There was never any discussion as to what the duration of the dives would last or depth of dives. No one had a watch or bottom timing device Kyriazis said they were "guestimating" It was clear that no one had a depth gauge. No one had a set of dive tables either. Allan said he had never used them from day one because his maths were not good enough. Kyriazis said he had heard of dive tables but never seen them. Both these divers could not describe the correct rate of ascent - save

to say that you should follow your small bubbles. Allan said he thought it was safe to dive up to 30 feet all day so long as you had a twenty minute break now and then. The only weather report they had was based on a newspaper and commercial radio the day before. There was no dive flag or buoyancy line on board. All these divers broke all fundamental rules of physics, physiology and safety in relation to diving.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In a very real sense the major cause of Leask's death was the possession of this party of divers of a surface supply air breathing system in relation to which they received no form of training.

The comments and recommendations relate mainly to the training or more appropriately the lack of training, use and regulation of surface supplied air. The Coroner also comments that if "scuba" tanks had have been used instead of "hookah" it would have been highly unlikely for the deceased to have undertaken 5 dives and as a result he may have remained within the threshold of safety.

GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEMS GENERAL MEETING 18 FEBRUARY

DON ABELL

At our general meeting on 18th February, we were indeed fortunate to be addressed by Barry Heard on the subject of Global Positioning Systems.

Barry is a school teacher by profession, a charter boat operator and a diver of almost 20 years experience. We also found out Barry's real claim to fame is that he went to primary school with Jeanette Large. In an effort to remain aloof and sophisticated Barry pretended that he did not remember Jenny.

The subject of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) is dear to the heart of VSAG. We have been seriously evaluating the merits of these systems and how they may advantage our club in locating existing dive sites and finding new sites. We previously considered the system some years ago but we were not satisfied with their accuracy or price. Both have improved and the club is again reviewing available systems with Andy Mastrowicz doing most of our research.

I had been keen to hear what Barry had to tell us but I admit to being sceptical as to how he would make the subject of interest to our general meeting. My concern was without foundation as Barry did a first class job of informing all those in attendance.

Barry is well qualified to talk on the subject. He has a system on his charter boat. He has undertaken evaluations of the system as a tool for diving. He has also undertaken an assignment to evaluate the use for people in mountainous country. Barry's talk explained the attributes of previous methods of locating wreck sites. One method was by using a sextant. VSAG tried this approach at one time with little success, As Barry confirmed, a sextant is hard to use on a small boat.

GPS Systems have been around for years but as the number of satellites orbiting the earth increases the use of the systems is becoming easier.

Basically the system works by bouncing its signals off satellites to determine the position on the earth's surface. The reference to a number of satellites works the same as coordinating compass references. Each satellite sends its signal to the required co-ordinate

Each satellite signal is from a different direction and where they cross each other is the required location. (I am sure Barry Heard would explain this better than I am)

This system is potentially very accurate. This is the system that allowed the allied forces to put rockets through selected doorways and windows during the Gulf War

Even though the normal public do not get normal access to the Military GPS System, the "civilian" system is still supposed to be accurate to 15 meters or more. Since the US Military still think that 15 meters is a bit too accurate they scramble the signal so that it is only reliable for 50 meters.

The Military system in the Gulf War was fine tuned to it's most accurate because Iraq did not have military hardware which would access and utilise GPS for it's purposes.

When we are searching for a wreck site, 50 meters is fairly accurate. If we could drop a buoy knowing that we only had a 50 meter radius to cover with our depth sounders, It should be a fairly speedy and simple task.

Barry spoke and answered questions for 1 hour and 15 minutes, and the session could have easily continued such was the level of interest.

VSAG will continue to evaluate available systems. Any member who wants to contribute their knowledge should speak to Andy. Your input would be appreciated.

Many thanks to Barry Heard for his talk and to Bob Scott for his effort in arranging this session.

DIVING INTO THE PAST

JOHN LAWLER

Diving into the past has chosen two articles for this edition of Fathoms.

In 1975, Justin Liddy was our President and I have come to appreciate that Justin does have a way with words. Hope you enjoy Justin's Presidents' Report from 16.9.75.

"Safety in Diving" is the all important motto of the VSAG. It really is a credit to VSAG has and is continuing to be placed in our attitude to diving.

It is also interesting therefore to read an editorial written by Brian Lynch and Dave Carroll in October 1975. Take note of the comments relating to gear. It is really a good comment and believe it or not some divers in VSAG still turn up having left some or in one recent case all of their diving gear at home. Hope you enjoy these contributions from previous days in VSAG.

October 1975 FATHOMS

Presidents Report - 16/9/75

I would like to welcome you all to the 22nd Annual General Meeting of the VSAG. Annual reports are usually pretty dreary things because it sounds like a few of us are skiting about our achievements. This isn't so, in so far as its not so much skiting as being proud of the club we are.

We as a club are proud of the fact we have been able to provide such varied, and shall we say exciting.

To name a few VSAG and members privately have dived and haunted such places as:-

Eden, the heart of Bariboogi Bell Country.

Wilson's Prom, which seems to be our favourite Easter jaunt.

Phillip Island and the spectacular Pinnacles.

Westernport bay and Crawfish Rock.

Cape Shank, home of the elusive Bazza Cray and of course the old Port Phillip Bay were we have managed to get in nearly every point along it's coastline, with the possible exception of Werribee Sewerage outlet.

Then down to Cape Otway, Portland, Moonlight Head, Lochard Gorge and etc. Some of us even made it back to Mt Gambier before the old pic's permit system ran out.

Further afield we've had members in such places as Tasmania, Preservation and King Islands and of course at least one trip to some place called Poor Knights. We've even received reports from members diving the Greek Islands, Fiji and other exotic places.

So all in all it's been a pretty good year.

A few facts and figures appear in every annual report and here are some of ours.

Over the past year we have had a total of 52 weekends.....

and of these 52 weekends the club has some sort of thing going for 50 of the weekends.. the other 2 weekends we had a bit of a bludge.

On those 50 occasions we had 7 socials, 29 dives and 14 training dives. Added to these are the many impromptu events organised by different members and it all adds up to a pretty sort of exciting year.

Although this year we had two rather sad events..One was when Paul Seir got married and the other was when I got married. Speaking of marriage, the natural follow on of that so I'm told is that Brian Lynch and Ron Coomber are expecting editions to the diving community (must be something about the English).

Apart from diving trips, we also led a pretty varied social life with such things as snow skiing, water skiing, trips up rivers, and down rivers and even down a few holes around Rushworth. The value of all this comes out when one thinks a little and realises that what could have started out as a list of facts and figures really lays open what can be seen as the real value of a club like ours.

You may enter this club as a raw novice knowing about as much as Flipper.

The club can provide you with basic training like many commercial outfits, and as a follow on can also provide you with something that you cannot buy and that thing is GUIDANCE from divers of varied experience. Perhaps a better way of putting it is to call to mind the club motto which is safety in diving.

Added to this is the fact that we as a club have bought together people from all walks of life. We have white and blue collar workers, the rich and the not so rich, the talented and the not so talented, the raw recruit and the experienced diver. Out of this conglomeration of humanity you get a nucleus of people who are prepared to put up with the short comings of such a group, and also you get the occasional group who can't handle it and these stay a while and then we lose them. For this I am sorry but somebody once said, you can't please everyone. Those who stay and perservered turn out to be fairly good divers, and being a bit selfish these are the type of people that VSAG want. I know this sounds hard but these are the facts. Those of you that have stayed we like to think, enjoy the type of company that VSAG provided.

Those of you that are here tonight have somehow learned the unwritten philosophy of VSAG and seem to like it.

It takes a special breed of person to dive with us and somewhere along the line we've done the right thing because the figures speak for themselves. We are a successful club and we manage to have good dives only because you as members make it all possible and as President I would like to thank each and everyone of you for making this club what it is today and I hope that you continue to dive and enjoy the company of VSAG.

That's about all I've got to say and that's probably too much, but there are two more things I'd like to say.

Firstly, I would like to thank the following people,

firstly the boat owners, (Bazza, Dave, Trevor, Max, Morris, Peter Saunders) and John Goulding, our very hard working secretary, D.J who managed to keep the books straight. All those who helped Pat and Allan in training. Dave C and Brian for producing the newsletter (and more lately Glynis Cutts). David Moore as a Social Secretary, Ron Coomber as a Medical Officer, Our S.D.F delegates and all of you who helped in any way.

Secondly. At this stage of the proceedings we should pause for a moment while the Clubman of the Year Award is presented. This award was instituted some four years ago to try and revive interest in club activities. Somewhere along the line it seemed to work as results speak for themselves.. Looking at the results it's good to see names like Frank Derkson, Trevor Cowley, Carey Ramage and John Marshall, who although relative new comers managed to amass a rather impressive number of points.

Also figuring prominently are Tony Snushall, Morris Gagliardi and Peter Oakley. Special mention must go to Bazza who always managed to amass an impressive total even with family commitments.

Anyway to get down to the business at hand - in 3rd place Brian Lynch : in second place John Goulding and taking out the Honors is Dave Moore, and if he's awake I would like to present him with this shield with congratulations from all.

JUSTIN LIDDY

PRESIDENT

October 1975 FATHOMS

EDITORIAL

The time has gone as the walrus said, to talk of many things, and now we are down to the cabbage and kings bit. This will be the first magazine of our new year, and our last effort at an editorial. Thanks to many of you, both Dave and I had a comparatively easy period as co-editors of our illustrious journal, articles have flowed freely, and I think that you have all enjoyed yourselves, so to speak. In the coming year we hope to visit both new and old diving spots, and I am sure that all our trusty correspondents will be along, pens and paper at the ready. We are always on the lookout for new diving spots, and as Johnny Goulding will tell anyone who has three hours to spare, try a disused coalmine one day.

Now on a serious note, remember our club motto is "safety in diving" and that each one of us before taking care of anyone else in the water must be able to take care of ourself. That means looking after and checking our own gear prior to diving, no one really wants a buddy who has left half there equipment at home,

or one who doesn't own the right gear anyway, so as the scouts say "be prepared". There is another note. The best of us (a poor statement as the following will show) can fall into one of the worst situations possible when diving. The spelling of the word is COMPLACENCY. One of the two editors (initials not B.L.) recently became narced not quite out of his mind at 110 feet in Portsea hole, after a wild night on the grog. It was rather frightening, but the more frightening bit came afterwards. The person in question realised that despite his knowing a hell of a lot about diving, practical and theory etc and despite having abused, cajoled, advised etc for many years on what not to do before and during dives, he became better (so he thought) than everyone else, broke the rules (knowing what he was doing was wrong) and thus jeopardised his own safety and everyone else's. Without wishing to become pedantic, he hopes sincerely that he has sobered up. It is hoped that everyone else knows the story and learns from it, and on that note we will end an era. Good and Safe diving for the year, "The terrible twins"

DAVE CARROLL - BRIAN LYNCH

FOR SALE

AVON INFLATABLE BOAT

An AVON inflatable boat, it is in brand new condition and has very little use. It is the SUPERSPORT range, and is 13ft long and 5ft 6in wide, with 17in dia. pontoons. This boat retails at \$5846 and I am asking

\$3900 O.N.O

If any members are planning to buy a new boat, it would be in their interest to look at this first.

Contact: B. Turton, 6 Harley St., Dingley.

Tel: 551 1042