

FATHOMS

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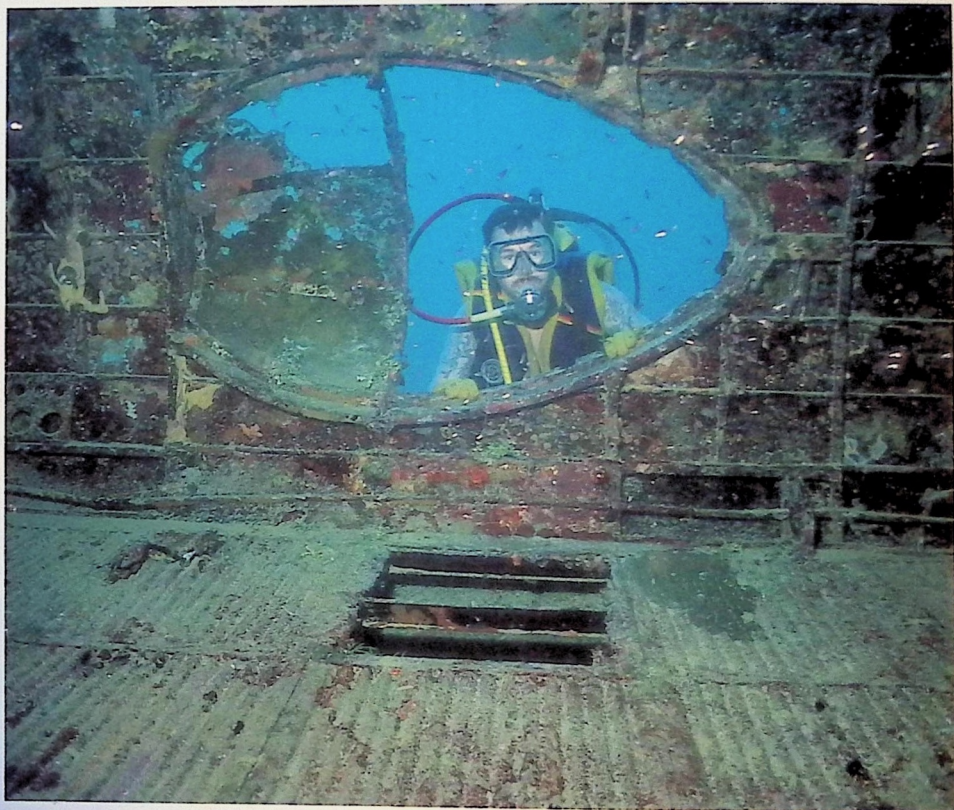
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VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

FEB - MAR 93

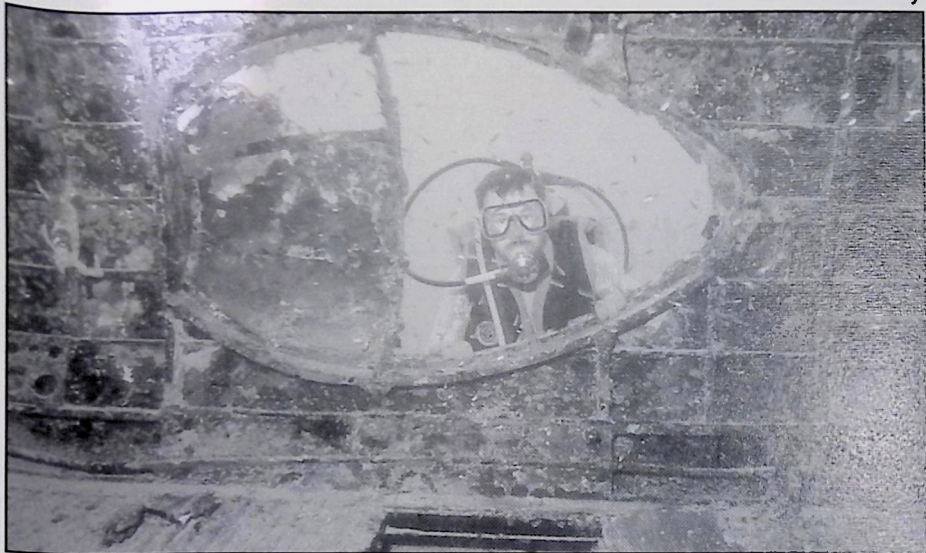
VSAG

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 where bar facilities are available prior to and after the General Meetings. 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 independant diving freedom. It believes that divers must take a responsible attitude toward the protection and preservation of the marine environment but as a general rule is opposed to legislative measures that place prohibitive limitations and restrictions 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 18th February 8.00pm

Thursday 18th March 8.00pm

North Melbourne Football Club

Fogarty Street, North Melbourne

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23rd February - Mick Jeacle's Place

23rd March - Alex Talay's Place

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EDITORIAL



Welcome to another year of diving and Fathoms.

I am grateful to all of those who have contributed to this edition and ask all active members to make an effort this year to write an article or two for the newsletter.

In January we saw history being made with the acceptance for membership of Andrew Maybus. Up until Andrew's application the youngest member ever to join VSAG was Pat Reynolds, who was accepted in 1958 at the age of 15 1/2.

Andrew's membership was granted just a couple of days before his 15th birthday. Not

only is this quite an event in itself but Andrew first dived with us in January 1992. Andrew's father, Leo has been diving for over 20 years and first associated with VSAG 17 years ago. However it took him that long (17 years) before he finally joined.

Well done to the Maybus family who join the Truscotts in having a father and son diving with VSAG.

In this edition of Fathoms we have pushed the dive calendar out until June. You will notice that we have also organised guest speakers at the February, March, April and May General Meetings. Each of the speakers are very experienced in their subject and their presentations will enhance the meetings.

Please try to be at the meetings.

John Goulding
Editor

NOTICE

Guest Speakers at General Meetings

*Don't Miss These
Interesting Presentations*

18th February

Barry Heard will speak to the Meeting about Global Positioning Systems.

18th March

Barry Andrewartha will give a presentation on some of his diving experiences.

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

OVERDUE SUBSCRIPTIONS

The following people had not paid their 1992/93 Annual Subscriptions as at the end of December 1992 and will be deleted from the membership unless the \$45 subscription is paid within 10 days of the posting of Fathoms.

Jack Namiota

Max Synon

Alisdair Stewart

Bill Hayes

Peter Harkin

Geoff Williams

Gary Thorn

Amanda Tutton

Neil Medhurst

Ian Jaeger

Jackie Patterson

V.S.A.G. WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

The following people were accepted for membership at the January Committee Meeting.

ANDREW MAYBUS

Andrew is probably the youngest member ever to join V.S.A.G. Andrew was 14 when accepted and turned 15 on 28th January.

Andrew first dived with us at Refuge Cove last year and has completed training to Full Open Water standard. It was good to see him along at Refuge Cove this year.

Andrew is Leo's son who was a regular visitor to V.S.A.G. for 17 years before joining.

SCOTT STELL

Scott has been a regular visitor to our club meetings and dives over the past two years.

He has an Advanced Open Water ticket, is single and lives in Doncaster.

Telephone: 848 3182.

FLINDERS - DECEMBER 27

DON ABELL

Our final dive day for calendar 1992 was scheduled for Sunday 27th December so as to give everyone sufficient time to recover from Christmas Day and look forward to a pleasant day on the water.

The weather forecast was perfect and three boats plus thirteen divers listed themselves to dive.

In attendance:

Mick Jeacle Ross Luxford John Lawler

Pat Reynolds Murray Black

Chris Lewellyn (Out of Retirement and current Cover Girl)

Paul Tipping (Feels that he can dive now that he has finally paid his Subs)

Jack Namiota (The temptation of Crayfish is too much)

Peter Vleugel (Still trying to pass the admittance examination for Qld.)

Guests:

Stuart Rose Dave Machen Scott Stell

The dive plan was simple. Locate and catch some crays. We decided to try the Channel location which was so successful last season. I estimate that about a dozen crays were taken after a few undersize had to be returned to their nursery. It may sound a lot but is in fact less than 1 cray per diver.

The highlight of the day had to be the diving conditions. The water was warm. It was better than surface conditions as a strong breeze was quite cool between dives. Even better was the visibility of 40 - 50 feet.

I was diving with Tipping, the older, we both enjoyed a good dive. Paul managed to pick up his quota of abalone as we guided through some good ledge territory. It has been so long since Paul has dived that he forgot the standard V.S.A.G. procedure and offered to share the holding of the pick.

It was also good to see three visitors diving with the club.

The optimism award goes to Leo Maybus who rang me at 10.00pm looking for 2 berths on the dive boats. This would not be a problem in itself but the limited available boats were filled early in the night.

Debriefing was held at the Flinders Pier. One of the attractions of this dive site is its close proximity to the launching place which makes for a shorter day by cutting up to an hour off the boat travel time.

NO GO TO SHIPWRECK PROTECTED ZONES

DES WILLIAMS

For many months now the M.A.U. (now Maritime & Historical Archaeology Unit of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria) has been looking at opening access to divers on the four protected no go zones around four shipwrecks.

The wreck sites are "Joanna", "William Salthouse", "Clarence" and "City of Launceston", all located in Port Phillip.

The M.H.A.U. has met with commercial dive operators and listened to private divers on this proposal. Recently, a feasibility study questionnaire was circulated to all dive charter operators for their comments.

Unfortunately, only 25% of them bothered to reply, although some responses were encouraging. The unit has therefore concluded that such a poor return of interest indicates "there is no major client market demand for access to Protected Zones at this stage. Therefore, there is very little merit in pursuing a scheme which will commit a significant proportion of unit staff time in setting up and managing a scheme which may in fact not be utilised to its full potential by charter users".

So, for the time being, at least the four shipwrecks above, will remain unvisited by the majority of divers.

NOTICE

LABOR DAY LONG WEEKEND-CAPE CONRAN

6th, 7th & 8th March

5 Cabins and 5 Powered Camp Sites have been booked at the Burbang Caravan Park, Cape Conran over the Queen's Birthday Long Weekend.

Cape Conran and nearby Beware Reef offer excellent reef and wreck diving.

Travelling time to Cape Conran is about 4.5 hours drive from Melbourne.

Take Princes Highway to Orbost, turn off at Orbost and take road south to Marlo. At Marlo turn east to Cape Conran.

Burbang Caravan Park is on the left several kilometres out of Marlo along the Cape Conran Road. (Telephone: 051 548 219)

Organiser: Sant Khan Telephone: H. 429 9948 W. 276 2688

PAT REYNOLDS 50TH BIRTHDAY

27TH FEBRUARY

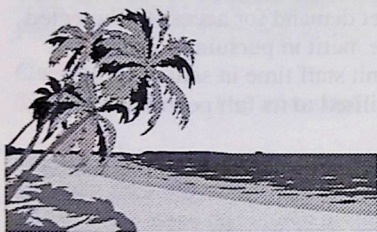
On the 27th February Pat Reynolds, who joined V.S.A.G. when he was just 15 1/2 years old, will turn 50.

To mark the occasion a function is being held in his honour (details from Mick Jeacle Telephone: 059 712 786).

Over the past 34 1/2 years Pat has been one of the most active of all members and his continued attendance at dives, meetings and social events is a tribute to his keenness and stamina.

Keep it up Pat and Congratulations.

John Goulding



SPECTACULAR REEF 17/1/93

MICK JEACLE

Having been caught out on the bay the previous day in one of the most violent thunderstorms one could experience, the possibility of diving the next day seemed impractical, if not impossible.

In fact, the drive down to Sorrento saw much of the same weather, with black skies, thunder & lightning, and torrential rain being experienced.

Now those who know my habits and traits would realise that I am usually pessimistic when it comes to the weather, but funnily enough this day I was indeed confident that the skies would clear and we would see a glorious day's diving. I was not disappointed.

Seventeen divers turned up and these were allocated between 4 boats. An early start of 8.30am was scheduled in order to catch slack water flood at around 9.30. Despite some holdups, we were on site about 9.45 and ready to dive into beautiful calm, blue water.

Visibility was probably in the vicinity of about 50 to 60 feet. A slight ebb current was experienced due to our late arrival, but this enable us to cover a greater area in a very relaxed way. Fish life was prolific and the colours of the soft corals on display were magnificent. It's got me tossed how conditions could be so good following the huge storm we saw the day before. In fact I've given up trying to

decipher the days when good visibility should be the order of the day, as all too often the opposite occurs.

Following lunch some divers elected to dive at the abalone beds, and others elected to do a drift dive off Queenscliff. Visibility had deteriorated significantly at the abalone beds and it wasn't worth the effort. However, the drift dives most likely produced better conditions. It was good to see Mick Jackiw join us for a dive, together with his "Devil Cat". You can pick the days Mick!

Another stranger on the day was Bill Hayes who usually restricts his diving for the year to the Refuge Cove weekend. You too can pick 'em Bill, or did Gloria muck up the leave pass this year.

Some other observations:

If you want to be assured of good visibility, be sure Peter Vleugel is going on the dive. This bloke is uncanny, and has probably seen the best diving Victoria has to offer, in the shortest time, than any other club member. Keep it up Peter.

It seems Neville Viapree's boat refuses to start unless the cowl is removed from the motor. President Abell was none too impressed as they drifted towards the heads in familiar state. Get it serviced Nev.

Adrian Ezard joined us for his first dive following his arrival from England some months ago. Adrian is a member of the British Sub Aqua Club and he will be here for at least 2 years. He was heard to say upon surfacing that we are certainly spoilt and do we realise the diving we have on our own doorstep. Apparently there is nothing to compare with our "Heads Area" in the British Isles. We certainly do Adrian. No doubt we will see you on another outing soon.

Pat Reynolds, I am sad to report, is suffering from Alzheimers. He rang at 7.10am on the morning of the dive to enquire as to the meeting time of 8.30am. "Must be a misprint" he says. Told him I was leaving at 7.40 and for him to hurry up. When he arrived at 7.55 I questioned his lateness and he stated he couldn't explain why he was late as he was ready to leave home at 7.30 to reach my place at 7.40. He could not remember what he was doing from 7.30 to 7.45. *Does this happen to everyone when you turn 50?*

Jack Namiota was booked in for the dive, but he too thought the early start time was a misprint and was caught without any air in his tanks, so he couldn't dive. Get 'em filled in advance Jack.

All in all it was a great day's diving. Thanks Ross, Mick and Neville for providing the use of their boats.

SPECTACULAR REEF 17/1/93

DES WILLIAMS

It is ages since I wrote an item for "Fathom", but there has been no point since I haven't dived with the Club for ages. That is not until Sunday 17th January '93 when Mick Jeacle led V.S.A.G.ers to Spectacular Reef.

I was in Ross Luxford's boat along with Peter Vleugal, Tamara Luxford, Ross' mate Russell and Adrian, a B.S.A.C. diver currently in Australia for a couple of years.

This turned out to be a great combination and we had a very enjoyable day. The weather was good to us too and despite the tropical downpour we had received 12 hours before the dive, the visibility was very good.

Mick had us over Spectacular Reef just on slack water as a grotty zinc carrier steamed through, everyone put their gear on to be in the water right after the ship passed by. It was good to see Ross Luxford dive the reef, as usually the boat owner misses the best dive to look after his passengers, but in this case I was pleased to take charge of the boat.

Peter, Russ and Ross dived and reported the scenery to be very pretty, plenty of fish and very good viz.

Later Adrian and I dived the reef between Queenscliff and Pt. Lonsdale to avoid exceeding 60ft for Adrian's first dive with the Club. We dived very well together, staying close in the current and sheltering under the limestone overhangs to look for bottles and take in varied marine life.

I believe Adrian enjoyed himself, this his first dive in Australia since arriving in Australia two months ago. Do hope we see more of him at meetings and on dives as he is well used to the poor visibility and conditions around the Isle of Wight, U.K. so our 60ft viz on this particular occasion was a "soda" for him.

Later we lunched off Point Lonsdale, scrounged for a few abs and made another drift dive off Queenscliff before returning to Sorrento to watch the antics at the boat ramp, as everyone struggled to recover boats quickly. It was a real holiday "bun-fight" and many drivers were driving "by ear"!

We were just in time to see a Range Rover owner back his boat into the grille and bonnet of the car below him on the ramp. We departed as the victim driver turned zinc cream red with anger, using every swear word in the book about the Mercury motor inserted into his car. Oh! Happy holiday time!!

Thanks again Ross and be sure to bring Russ along again soon.

NOTICE

WILSON'S PROMONTORY EASTER

9th, 10th, 11th & 12th April

Once again V.S.A.G. will be returning to Tidal River at Wilson's Promontory for our traditional Easter diving break.

This will be our 20th Easter visit to the Prom and we have been fortunate to secure 20 sites on the flat.

To ensure your place book early. Names and money will be recorded at the February and March meetings.

Organiser: Don Abell Telephone: 889 4415

REFUGE COVE - AUSTRALIA DAY

JOHN GOULDING

The 18th V.S.A.G. Australia Day Refuge Cove trip took place over the weekend of 30th/31st January and 1st February.

On board the Rosalia was 13 VSAGers and they were joined at Refuge by a further 20 members and friends in private boats.

Rosalia Skipper Dave Mulcahy met us on the Friday night at the Foster Pub, where to our surprise he introduced us to his fiancée Sue.

Sue proved to be an excellent decky over the weekend; helping with food preparation, packing, caring for the sick and injured and even coming to the rescue when everyone else was out of cigarettes.

A smooth sea and favourable tide had us in Refuge Cove by about 11.20 on Saturday morning and then the work started. Lugging gear up the beach, pitching tents, opening tinnies, swatting March flies etc etc.

After lunch it was back to sea and those who wanted to dive jumped off in Waterloo Bay. The remainder of us had a few quiet beers and on return to Refuge socialised with the others. It was during one of these activities that I lost my footing when stepping from the Rosalia to Alex's boat, and went for the mother of all tumbles.

Saturday night saw most people in fine form for a singalong led ably by big Mick.

On Sunday the Rosalia and her crew departed again for Waterloo Bay where we had a couple of dives amongst the massive boulders and swim troughs. Although visibility wasn't terrific there were very sheltered spots among the boulders where we would find almost crystal clear water in which the rays of sunlight would penetrate down from the surface like brilliant laser beams.

Sunday night again saw a fair bit of merriment although we did notice some early retirees.

On Monday, after packing up the camp, the Rosalia crew had another dive before heading home.

In all it was another great Refuge Cove weekend, great weather, good diving and a lot of laughs.

However, this year marks the end of the official Australia Day long weekends. In future years the Australia Day holiday will be celebrated on 26th January irrespective of the day. So in some years there will be a long weekend and in other years there won't.

However there does appear to be plenty of interest to keep this weekend going in January and hopefully we can continue the tradition.

To mark the occasion of our 18 years of Australia Day weekends, (one of which the weather prevented us from actually getting down to Refuge) we had a plaque made which is now erected at the Refuge Cove Boat Campers site. My thanks to Murray Black for having the plaque made.

**VICTORIAN SUB AQUA GROUP
REFUGE COVE - AUSTRALIA DAY
1976 - 1989 'MIRRABOOKA'
1990 - 1993 'ROSALIA'**



Going Ashore



The Cove



Jeanette & Justin



Murray & Charlie (Little Waterloo Bay)



The Pirates Becalmed



Paul Tipping After Sign Erection!



Jackie Pattersons After Dive Ecstasy



North Cove

DIVING INTO THE PAST

JOHN LAWLER

A very happy new year to you from DITP, I hope 1993 brings you good diving and safe diving.

During the Christmas break I took time to dig further into the past history of VSAG and I can assume you all have good stories from the past.

To start the first issue of 1993, we'll go back to dark 1978 in that year John Goulding (life member of VSAG) was our president, Dave Borg was Vice President and Property Officer, Max Synon was Points Scorer and S.O.F. Delegate (along with John Goulding), Barry Truscott was our Librarian and Pat Reynolds the Medical Officer. Some of these positions don't apply to the current committee structure, however all past records are in my care so I guess I'm "Librarian".

There are two extracts from the April edition of Fathoms, the first is a report by John Goulding on the passing of the mighty anchor which today remains on show at Port Campbell.

The second is written by Brian Lynch and tells the story of the famous wreck at Port Campbell of the Loch Ard.

Good reading.

LOCH ARD WRECK

JOHN GOULDING

Following requests from the Victorian Premiers Department and the History Advisory Council to raise the anchor from the Loch Ard the Scuba Divers Federation of Victoria sought assistance from the VSAG Torquay Scuba Club and Mr Len Brennan - a salvage diver from Melbourne.

On Sunday 12th March after a disappointing dive at the wreck site the previous day, a dive was planned with the specific objective of raising one of several anchors located in the bow section of the wreck which lay approx. 20 metres off the most southern tip of the island.

The swell pattern of the water varied but did allow boats to enter through the gorge to pick up divers who had travelled by car from Port Campbell.

Members of the Torquay Scuba Club located the anchor at approximately 10.30am and fixed a line with a floating buoy. VSAG members assisted in placing the large rubber lifting bag in position and affixing it to the anchor with steel cables.

Scuba tanks and other cylinders of air were then ferried by divers from the surface to the anchor and used for inflating the bag.

After a short time it was discovered that the steel cables were actually wrapped around two anchors and a fresh start had to be made. The task seemed rather hopeless, for as the afternoon drew on, the anchor refused to budge.

A crowbar was then taken down and after some levering, force was applied, the air bag lifted the anchor from the ocean floor and raced to the surface. This was a particularly dangerous part of the operation, for had a diver been hit by the bag or anchor or entangled in the cable or debris, the result could have easily been fatal.

However, Max Synon who prized the anchor free, was able to keep well clear when the anchor began to move.

The anchor slung beneath its lifting bag, was then towed to Port Campbell jetty by a local fishing boat, where it was then raised for public viewing before being lowered back into the water until the official anchor raising ceremony on Easter Saturday 25th March.

This was an excellent venture to experience and all divers from all groups present worked well as a team.

Anchor:	Total Height	84"
	Width Fluke to Fluke	60"

THE TRAGIC LOCH LINE

BRIAN LYNCH

The Loch Ard which sank off Mutton Bird Island one hundred years ago, was one of a fleet of 23 bearing the Loch name. The Line came into being in the 1870's with the introduction of iron sailing ships, when metal replaced wood and rope in hull, mast and rigging construction.

The Loch Line soon established itself, because the iron ships were more comfortable, more stable and had a larger cargo capacity.

Unfortunately the name also became synonymous with disaster, 16 ships of the fleet were lost at sea.

1. The Loch Level outward bound from Geelong wrecked on King Island.
2. The Loch Long lost with all hands out from New Caledonia.
3. Loch Sloy lost on Kangaroo Island.
4. Loch Vennacher, rammed and sank in the Thames, was raised and was lost on Kangaroo Island the first trip out.
5. Loch Lomond, out from Newcastle, lost with all hands.
6. Loch Maree out from Geelong lost without trace.
7. The Loch Earn, sank after running down the French steamer Ville de Havre in mid ocean.
8. The Loch Ryan, renamed the John Murray wrecked on Malden Island.
9. Loch Fyne out from Lyttleton, sank without trace.
10. Loch Sunart wrecked on Skulmartin Rock.
11. Loch Shiel wrecked off the Welsh Coast.
12. Loch Moidait driven ashore on the Dutch Coast.
13. The Loch Carron, rammed and sank the barque Inverkip, a disaster which cost the company 30,800 pounds in damages, before herself being sunk by enemy action during World War I, as were also the Loch Broom and the Loch Torridon, which brings us to the sixteenth and for us certainly the most notorious the Loch Ard. From her launching in Glasgow in 1873 there was some talk of her being a voodoo ship, although there doesn't seem to be any evidence to show that seamen didn't want to sail her, however her subsequent record shows that at the very least she was an unlucky vessel.

She was disinterred off Tory Island on the North West coast of Ireland during her maiden voyage in December 1873, and forced to return to the shipyards of the Clyde for refitting.

While there, reloading her cargo which had been off-loaded during the refit, she was driven from her moorings during the heavy gale and stranded.

She set out for Australia in January 1874. On 2nd April near the island of St. Pauls in the South Indian Ocean she was dismasted and took a lot of water into her holds from the huge cross seas, almost sinking. She was saved when the rigging and cordage was cut away. She arrived under Jury right off Port Phillip Heads 49 days later, the whole voyage lasting 114 days nearly four months. It is interesting to note that eight iron vessels were dismasted on the Australian run that year.

During the next two years all went well, after extensive repairs she left Melbourne for London loaded with wood and the second trip also to London again with wool.

The Loch Ard left Gravesend on 1st March 1878 with 51 passengers and crew and with a general cargo on board, then valued at more than 53,000 pounds. The voyage out was uneventful, the water apart from open gale being moderate. Captain Gibb was a very competent seaman although this was his first trip as captain in the Loch Ard. In retrospect the one ominous sign was that the ship experienced trouble with the compasses, probably due to the iron in the ship. A major problem occurred on 28th May and then because of foggy cloudy weather, observations made just after this now most certainly appear unreliable.

So on the evening of 30th May the ship was driving before a freshening wind straight at one of the most fearsome coastlines in the whole world. Captain Gibb obviously worried, did not attend a farewell party given by the passengers but remained on deck. Because of the freshening wind sail was taken in during the night and then at 3am with Loch Ard heading due north through a thick haze, breakers were heard and high rugged cliffs appeared, spearing out of the mist.

The captain attempted to hoist more sail, to enable the ship to change course, but was by this time into the white water. They attempted to swing onto the port tack, that is turn left, which they did. Once they slipped the anchor cables they gathered way and were in fact about to sail out of trouble, and had the ship been

carrying more sail at the time of crisis they would have probably made it. Unfortunately just when it seemed that Capt. Gibb had saved his ship, she struck a ledge on her starboard side and was immediately doomed. She was so close to the perpendicular cliffs of the Island that as she rolled her masts gouged rocks from the cliff face and passengers and crew on deck were showered with rocks, spars and pieces of rigging.

The port lifeboat was launched, but before anything could be done the Loch Ard sank capsizing it. Tom Pearce one of the two survivors was trapped beneath the boat for a while, and stayed with it until it drifted into the Gorge opposite the spot where the ship had struck. He also rescued Eva Carmichael from the Gorge. These two were the only survivors, all that was left of the unlucky 51 that had boarded her at Gravesend. Eva Carmichael herself lost six of her family when the ship went down. Wreckage piled eight feet high covered the sandy beach of the Gorge to mark the last resting place of the unlucky Loch Ard.

“PIER TO PIER UNDERWATER CHALLENGE”

PART ONE - SET UP By John Lawler

Late in 1992, I contacted Warrick McDonald to put to him an idea that had begun going round in my mind for about 5 years. When I explained the idea I became very excited to hear that Warrick had the same idea. We both saw a challenge to cross Port Phillip Heads from Portsea to Queenscliff - underwater.

We agreed in that phone discussion to take on the challenge and a date and time set up to draw up the plans. After some 3 hours of discussion we had the logistics in place. We would need sponsors boats, divers, co-ordinators, publicity, photographers, equipment specialists and a diving doctor. We would need assistance from water based authorities. We would need time to trial the equipment, test tidal flows.

After several more meetings all the basics had been secured. Two major sponsors had willingly agreed to support the underwater challenge. Apollo Australia would provide us with four underwater scooters and some wetsuits would design colourful tailor made wetsuits specifically for this purpose.

We then set the date - 16/1/93 - 2.30pm.

The results and full details will appear in the next issue of Fathoms.

AT HOME ON THE SIERRA NEVADA

DES WILLIAMS

In May of 1992 I attended a World Congress on Plastics in Agriculture held in Granada, Spain. The six day Congress was very intense, but the sight of the snow covered Sierra Nevada Mountains behind Granada, as I walked to the Congress each morning, was a great comfort for a Melbourne diver like me. With the Sierra Nevada that close, I really felt at home.

After the Congress, I moved on to England for 10 days visiting plastic fabricators (my line) and machinery agents for new equipment for our factory. I managed to take the underground route to the Imperial War Museum in London and later that day visited the bunker below Whitehall where Winston Churchill and his Cabinet spent the War Years directing the fight against Hitler.

The War Museum is fantastic, with an enormous collection of photographs and memorabilia pertaining to the sea war, including a beautifully built German one-man miniature submarine complete with one torpedo almost the same size as the sub itself!

Also on display was one of the tiny two-man submersible chariots used by the Italians to attach limpet explosives to the hulls of ships. There are some great stories out of World War II about the brave men on both sides who used these chariots to sink enemy ships in harbours. The two men wore grotesque looking re-breather apparatus on these daring raids a far cry from our dive gear today.

My next visit was to the Netherlands for an all too brief 3 days in Amsterdam to see the world famous Floriade Expo held only once every 10 years.

On my last day in Amsterdam, I managed a visit to the Ryksmuseum and wore out another pair of shoes looking at the fabulously rich maritime history of the Dutch, all beautifully displayed. There was a large section about the Dutch East India Company or V.O.C., which lost the "Gilt Dragon", "Batavia" and "Zeeuryk" on our Western Australian coast so long ago. All great stuff to me with a passion for maritime history, which leads me to remind you - keep watching Fathoms for details of another lecture planned for mid year by our friend Jack Honey. Over 50 V.S.A.G.ers attended Jack's last lecture to our group and we had a wonderful day. Will keep you posted.

MEDIA WATCH

Fabled Ship Reward Hopes Run Aground

Time is running out for treasure hunters hoping to collect the \$250,000 reward being offered to anyone who can find Warrnambool's fabled Mahogany Ship. Some searchers are returning to Warrnambool in a desperate attempt to discover the ship before the reward offer expires on February 28.

More than 20 search parties, from almost every state, have combed the area between Warrnambool and Port Fairy for any sign of the 16th century Portuguese caravel, but none has found conclusive proof of the ship.

One of the most determined searchers, North Queensland diviner Bob Sheen, is one of those who has returned to the area.

Last year Mr Sheen discovered timber 15 metres below Levy's Point carpark. But his sample, which turned out to be conifer, was too small to be carbon dated. Mr Sheen has returned to dig up a bigger sample.

Searchers have used everything, from state-of-the-art ground penetrating radars to a sack containing an old handsaw, in their attempts to find the ancient ship.

The Tourism Minister, Mr Pat McNamara, said the reward had created international interest in the Mahogany Ship and the possibility of confirming the Portuguese found eastern Australia before Captain James Cook.

"It would change the course of Australian history," he said.

Mr McNamara said the department would decide next month whether any of the findings so far was worth digging up.

Sun Herald 11th January 1993

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