

FATHOMS

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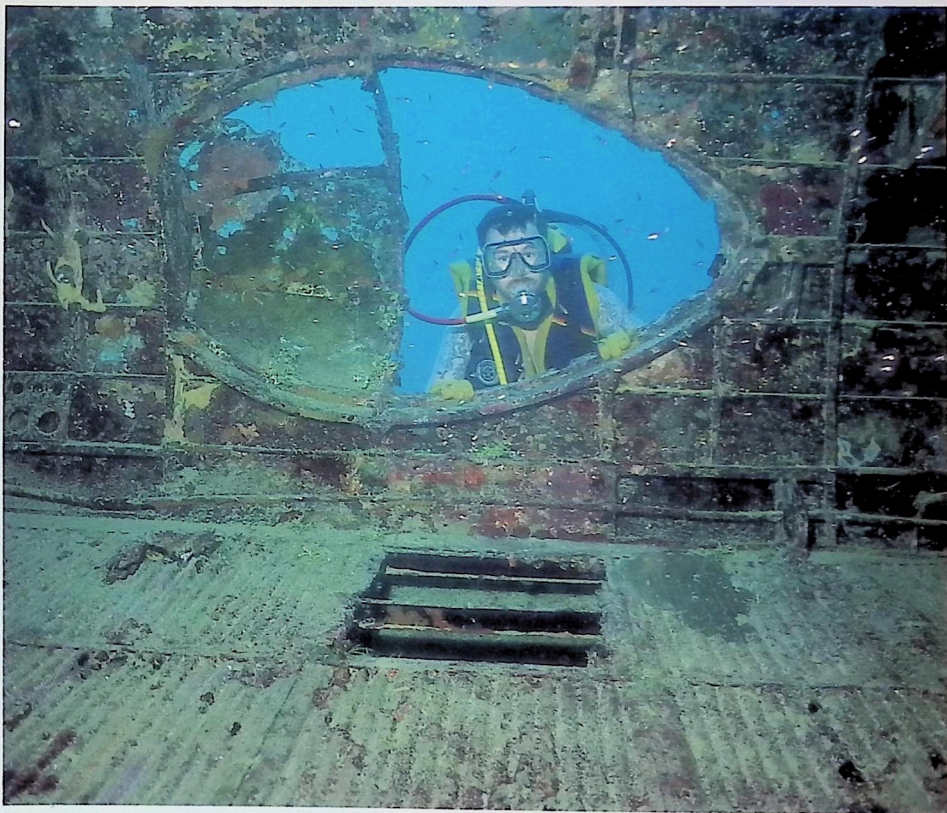
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VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

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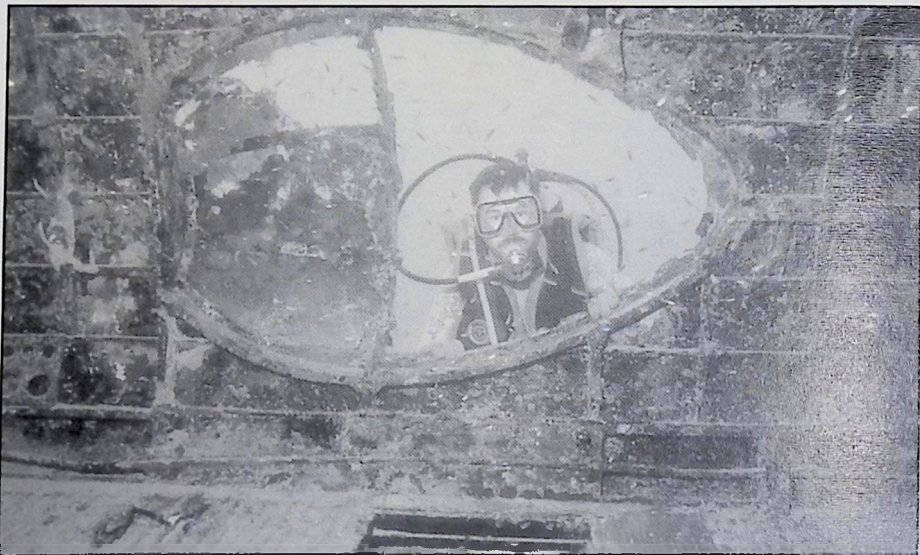
VSAG

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 17th February 1994, 8.00pm

Thursday 17th March 1994, 8.00pm

North Melbourne Football Club

Fogarty Street, North Melbourne

Meet beforehand at club for dinner

Next Committee Meetings:

Tuesday 22nd February - Mick Jeacle's place

Tuesday 22nd March - Alex Talay's place

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EDITORIAL



And so the V.S.A.G's 40th year begins - a real milestone. The Committee asks all members both past and present, to join in our celebrations during the year - you will receive more information soon and Mick Jeacle is planning a 40th Celebration Dinner you wont want to miss.

Happy New Year everyone, lets hope the weather improves soon so your editor can chase up members for many dive reports.

Consequently, there is very little content in this issue about DIVES done by the Club, but I am very grateful to those who have contributed to help me pad out this issue of Fathoms.

Great disappointment for those members who did venture down to Cape Conran for Christmas

there was little diving but a lot of fun. Read Tip's Tit-Bits for details of the trip and two good reports from Messers. Jeacle and Vleugal.

Our Club G.P.S is proving very popular with members, although there are few members who are still having difficulty coming to grips with the technology. Recently, Mick Jeacle was practising his typing skills on the G.P.S keyboard to show the girls how it works - "All you do girls is type in the colour of Mum's hair, BEEP BEEP, punch in the time of day, BEEP BEEP, add your height above sea level, BEEP BEEP, and press ENTER! JEEZUS! I have wiped the memory!" Oh well, back to the old drawing board for Andy Mastrowicz. Thanks Handy Andy.

I recently received some correspondence from Peter Stone down at Yarram and he sends his regards to all the "gang" at V.S.A.G. Peter says "I have fond memories of the day V.S.A.G and others raised the anchor off the LOCH ARD. How none of us weren't killed was a miracle. Great fun in those days."

Don Abell has locked up the overseas trip to the Solomons/Vanuatu for May and the

EDITORIAL cont.

group is now 15 strong so we are bound to have a great time. At least the weather will be more reliable than the garbage we have to put up with in Melbourne.

Please don't be shy about writing for Fathoms, as I very much welcome all types of articles, clippings and notices, even highly imaginative stuff like Mick Jeacle's "The Dive Of My Life" in our December Issue! The absolute deadline for contributions for the next issue is Tuesday 22nd March 1994, to give Alex Talay and John Lawler a chance to get it to you before the April Meeting.

DES WILLIAMS Editor

1994 VSAG 40 YEARS

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA CALLS FOR VOLUNTEERS

The 5th national Clean Up Australia Day is being held on
Sunday March 6th 1994

and it goes ahead rain or shine!

Clean Up Australia is now looking for volunteers to help co-ordinate or join in clean-ups in their local area. And there will be a chance for divers to do a bit.

Registration forms or more information about how you can get involved may be obtained by calling Adrienne Smith on

816 7030

**MINUTES OF S.D.F.V. MEETING
7TH DECEMBER 1993**

DES WILLIAMS

- (a) A big gathering of divers supported the S.D.F.V barbecue at Tidal River over the Melb. Cup weekend - A report on the proceedings will be produced for the December "DIVE LOG".
- (b) The R.M.I.T Club to run the next Melbourne Cup barbeque at Tidal River next year.
- (c) The newly issued Melbourne Water "GREAT OUTDOORS GUIDE" contains the S.D.F.V address and affiliated Club details - good advertising for us all!
- (d) Des Williams to continue as representative of th S.D.F.V on the Historic Shipwrecks Advisory Committee for a further three years.
- (e) S.D.F.V to lodge a formal complaint regarding the new abalone restrictions recently applied.
- (f) Much discussion about whether the S.D.F.V should continue as a member of Vic Sport; the steep membership fee being the stumbling block for the association's limited funds. Membership will be renewed and a member of Vic Sport should address S.D.F.V soon to explain advantages Vic Sport can offer.
- (g) Bairnsdale Scuba Club membership application approved.

Next meeting to be held Tuesday 1st February at the Robert Peel Hotel in North Melbourne 1994. Contact Des Williams if you have any further queries about items listed above.

**V.S.A.G. CAPE CONRAN
SUMMER DIVE TRIP 1993/94**

PETER VLEUGEL

Arriving at Cape Conran, our girls said "What has big Mick done to us?". The sign said "Adventure Park"..... I did an immediate deal. "We will stay just 3 nights - then we will take a vote before we stay on".

So here we are camping at an adventure park. Its raining and there are 50 knott winds blowing. The beaches are deserted and there isn't a lot of diving happening. I find the only way you can kid your family into participating on these camping holidays is to tell them of the exotic location and all of the wonderful seafood thats available. But so much for that - Day 2 rain and 50 knots.

Into Orbst to look around - saw a lot of familiar faces - all V-saggers. Next day we all decided to go caving - Buchan was invaded by V-saggers taking over the footpath at the local restaurant where we all enjoyed lunch and ice-creams. Pat should use the rubbish bin for his ice-cream stick not the local dog's bum!

Day 4 fishing and beaching - the weather is picking up but still 20 knott winds. Lots of mother's club meetings at 5p.m with savories and drinks. Day 5 still 20 knots. Mick suggested we go 4 wheel driving. You will always find this happens when you have purchased a brand new cruiser, not a mark or scratch until you discover the Old Coast Road to Bemm River. With us in the lead, followed by Leo's unmarked paintwork then Andy, all four wheel drives - loaded to the gunnels with people, we pursued the 27 K track through some of the toughest mud and swamp I've seen in a while. Big Mick was impressed sitting up there like Jackie, hanging on and reminding me of all the scratches. But after a while, you just get to the stage where you say "bugger the scratches" and blaze through anyway. A couple of hours later, we arrived at Bemm River. The others took the highway and arrived well before we did. A nice little place, a great little pub that sells ice-creams and displays lots of history with fish trophies on walls. After lunch the locals suggested that the Old Coast Road was impassable (ha ha), so we

decided we had enough bush bashing and drove back to camp the civilized way. Back at camp, the next mother's club meeting was underway.

New Year's Eve at the Marlo Pub for dinner and then on the balcony where the band sounded good. Paul Tipping's wild dancing was a site (bloody show-off). Then the rain set in, I never the main bar of the pub could hold 500 people.... but it did. We all moved back to camp to enjoy the rest of the evening and see the New Year in under a quickly constructed awning by the open fire. It was great.

New Year's day the weather started to pick up but still 20 knott winds. Bush races were the order of the day, so we decided to have a look. Paul Sier and Gail lost a bit of money and in the process, taught Leo's daughter Melanie how to gamble on the horses, look out Leo! Bazz also came off second best. The best part of the day was the dog jump competition, where the winning dog scaled a wall about 2.8m high.

Next mother's club meeting started off quietly with the weber barbecue loaded with fire wood. Benice was conned into playing her guitar for us when Tippo and Mick decided they might just know a few words. Well this soon escalated into a real sing along, an entertaining evening with the two baritones in a hot contest (Pouring lots of beer down their necks for lubrication). It was really an extraordinary night with lots of laughs.

SUNDAY the big dive day - dead flat. Got going really early (about 10a.m) 3 boats Micks, Bazzas and Andy's motored out to Beware Reef. Old Tippo and I dropped into the water just near the rock, into soup, till we got past the 18m mark then it cleared up - visibility about 10-12 m Terrific dive, the bottom wasn't unsimilar to Spectacular Reef in the bay, lots of fish and heaps of colour. The second dive - we dropped into 15m about 500m east of the rock. This dive wasn't quite as colourful, but still lots of fish life including yellow tail King fish. We waited around for the other divers to finish including the only lagger in the club - Leo Maybus - the chap with the permanent smile, until he dropped his tank, computer and ockey off his shoulder into 25m of water. Well, the smile soon faded to "glum". Never mind Leo, it can happen to anyone who dives in a dry suit! Bazza saved the day by risking his life to retrieve the gear which fell smack

into the centre of the wreck, on the southern end of the rock. After that, the permanent smile was back. Strong winds came up on our return to the ramp but all were home safely. After dinner that night it was into a game of Pictionary. Play this game, and you are sure to be thrown out of a caravan park for excessive noise. The game soon deteriorated when Paul Tipping drank too much and couldn't draw, and Leo and Neville were caught cheating. Mick and Annie started fighting over quality of artwork and my two girls eventually won the game.

The following day, off to Mallocoota inlet for a short drive, lunch at the pub, where Paul And Leslie reinstated their vows to each other, because that's where they met about 100 years ago.

Tuesday another dive day but only one boat, as the others departed Monday morning. Perfect weather so after some electrical repairs, down to the ramp - 25 trailers parked there so it must be good. In with the boat and off we go. Next thing we noticed, were the 25 boats all coming in. One of the boats waved us down to tell us there was a 40 knott wind at Marlo..... Back on the trailer and back to camp where all decided to pack up and leave because it was obvious that the weather was about to turn again.

We would like to thank Mick for organizing the trip and also for the boat owners for making their boats available. Thanks to Pat for minding the ladies whilst we were diving and all of the other families and individuals for making our holiday a success that will be remembered for a long time.

Thanks P.V

DIVING IN VANUATU

DON ABELL

As this goes to print in February, we are almost on our way. Well, it seems like that. Seventeen V.S.A.G members are planning to spend some quality time underwater in the South Pacific. In previous articles I have explained the diving we can expect on the "President Coolidge" and the "Toa Maru". I also set out some of the dives we might do from "Honiara"

In the remote possibility that we get tired of diving the "Coolidge", I thought it worth looking at some of the other dives available in Vanuatu. In particular these dives are accessible around Santo, the locality of "Coolidge".

Million Dollar Point.

At the end of the island of Espiritu Santo is a deep coral drop off. At the end of the war all new and used rolling stock of the US Military was offered to the French at eighteen cents in the dollar. The French bargained hard in the expectation that they would get everything at a very low price as the US didn't want to ship it all home. However, the US was not going to give it away so they built a ramp over the coral drop off and dumped millions of dollars of war machinery into the sea.

Diving this point reveals masses of machinery, mainly bulldozers, cranes, large trucks and other earth moving equipment. Diving is from three to thirty meters and provides some unique photographic possibilities.

The Blue Holes.

This is a freshwater dive about 20 minutes from the main township. The holes have a max depth of 20 meters and about 40 meters in diameter. It has excellent visibility and will probably be a good venue for a dive or snorkle between "Coolidge" Dives.

Coral Reefs.

Coral Reefs abound in the area. The Second channel has a warm current flow which provides the warm nutrients to feed. A colourful and prolific abundance of sea life. Again these will provide good snorkeling or diving between dives on the

“Coolidge”, viewing large sea fans, corals, sponges, sea whips and gorgonians not to mention an enormous variety of fish life.

Shark Feed.

I have been assured by Ross Luxford that the shark feed from Bokissa Island is worth the time. Well organized in 20 meters, the divers get an opportunity to see shark life at close hand. According to Ross, very close. But since he survived it should be worth the challenge.

“U.S.S Tucker”

This wreck is able to be dived from Bokissa but questions over the ownership of the wreck by islanders may make it impractical. However the story of the wreck is worth telling mainly because its fate was very similar to that of the “Coolidge”, and less than three months before the “Coolidge” went down.

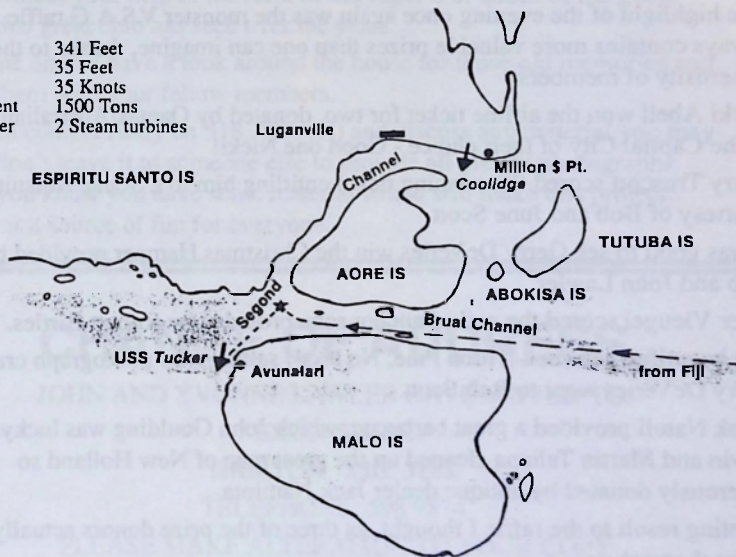
Named after Commodore Samuel Tucker who fought in the US Revolutionary Navy, the destroyer USS Tucker (DD374) was built in Norfolk, Virginia and launched on the 26th February 1936. She first saw action at Pearl Harbor whilst lying in a nest of five destroyers alongside the tender USS Whitney. Undergoing an overhaul, she was at her most venerable when the Japanese attacked. The enemy aircraft had commenced their dive on the battleships before the general alarm could be sounded, but one “Tucker” crew-men already had the after machine guns firing. Within minutes, the after five inch guns were blasting away while the engineering gang worked feverishly to reassemble machinery stripped down for repairs. Dive bombers came in low from all sides and Tucker’s frustration at not being able to call on her 35 knot speed, was converted into frantic firepower which brought three aircraft down in flames. The adrenalin rush was over in less than two hours. The Tucker had survived that fateful December morning in 1941.

For the next few months she patrolled the waters off Hawaii before engaging in convoy duty between Pearl Harbor and San Francisco. From April 1942, the Tucker escorted convoys to Pacific destinations, venturing as far as Fremantle on Australia’s west coast. Like the “Coolidge” her last port of call was Fiji. Her mission was to escort the SS Nira Luckenbach to Espiritu Santo.

On 3rd August 1942 the Tucker cleared Bruat Channel, south of Santo, then manoeuvred to enter the Second Channel where she struck a newly planted American mine amidships and broke in two. The central main deck buckled and immediately submerged under two meters of water. Crippled, the destroyer drifted helplessly until a torpedo boat towed her as close to shore as it dared, before the line was cut the anchor dropped. Once the Tucker stabilized, her commanding officer returned to cut the anchor chain and a motor launched pulled the ship close to the Avunatari village on Malo Island to beach in her 18 meters of water. Six men had lost their lives. The USS Tucker, with one battle star to it's credit from the Pearl Harbor raid, had only seen eight months of active service.

Statistics

Length	341 Feet
Beam	35 Feet
Speed	35 Knots
Displacement	1500 Tons
Motor Power	2 Steam turbines



We have five full days diving in Vanuatu and we don't want to cut down our time on the object of the whole trip so I imagine our time will be packed solid.

Now if that is not enough I should remind you that all of this is in the middle of the beautiful (If not idyllic) setting made famous by James A Michener in his "Tales of the South Pacific".

V.S.A.G. CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

DES WILLIAMS

Our Club Christmas function at Florinis Restaurant in Richmond on 3rd December, was a very pleasant evening indeed - we certainly were not underfed!! Thanks to Mick Jeacle, Charles Brincat and Jack Namiota for their part in organizing the evening. The strength of V.S.A.G was again evident, as we occupied the whole ground floor of the restaurant. Good to see so many members and spouses.

The highlight of the evening once again was the monster V.S.A.G raffle, which always contains more valuable prizes than one can imagine, thanks to the generosity of members.

Nicki Abell won the airline ticket for two, donated by Qantas/Australian Airlines, to the Capital City of their choice - Good one Nicki!

Barry Truscott scored the winning ticket entitling him to a Sonar Wetsuit by courtesy of Bob and June Scott.

It was good to see Gerry DeVeries win the Christmas Hamper provided by the club and John Lawler.

Peter Vleugel scored the coil of anchor rope provided by Robert Birtles.

The beautifully framed (Huon Pine, No less!) sailing ship photograph crafted by Gerry DeVeries went to Bob Scott.

Frank Natoli provided a great barbecue, which John Goulding was lucky enough to win and Martin Taliana cleaned up the great map of New Holland so generously donated by antique dealer Jack Namiota.

A fitting result to the raffle I thought, as three of the prize donors actually won prizes themselves.

The Club is very grateful to those who made donations to our Monster raffle - tremendous Club spirit.

V.S.A.G. 40TH YEAR COMMEMORATIVE VIDEO

The committee asks all members, past and present, to join into help the Club produce its 40th year souvenir video which will be available to all members as a record of the club and its history.

Andy Mastrowicz is co-ordinating and producing the video, but he cannot do it without your help in the form of old super 8 or slides of the good times this great club has seen over the years.

So come on and have a look around the house for those old memories and share them with your fellow members.

You can contact Andy on 318 3986 (H) and discuss any material you may have, don't leave it to someone else to provide all the old photographs when you know you have some material which will make this project souvenir a source of fun for everyone.

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TIP'S TIT-BITS

TONY TIPPING

Anyone who recommends the Club Christmas trip be held in Victoria even again has rocks in their heads - especially if they suggest East Gippsland the wettest part of the state. The Marlo - Cape Conran area is a beautiful part of the state and I'm sure if you had two weeks between Australia Day and Easter it would be near perfect for diving most days but this year at Christmas it was a flop! I've always pushed for Northern New South Wales such as Coffs Harbour, Byron Bay or Forster or perhaps South Australia eg Streaky Bay, Port Lincoln or maybe Robe because it never seems to rain over there. So Mick I told you so! Lets go to New South Wales and sell the two day dive early, so members are happy with the idea next year. If it rains I'll guarantee it will be hot. Plan early and sell the plan!

Despite the lousy weather and above the whinge we still had a great nine days at Marlo - unfortunately only one day was suitable for diving - maybe just as well, seeing I caught the best cray & Bazza didn't even crack it! We also had two days surfing in our long-johns with the kids boogie boards - Sant and Sally were Spartans going in the chilly Gippsland waters in Speedos only.

Big Mick was the camp Grub - it took him until the fifth day & threats from Annie to sleep outside because he hadn't had a shower. Admittedly the first four days were cold and wet and miserable and the queue for a cold shower wasn't really inviting, but when he finally did shower guess what? he forgot his towel!

Our group occupying about twelve sites had two day trips out of town. First to the Buchan Caves where you have a choice between the Fairy Caves and the Royal Caves - both had rave reviews and the towns were really organized by the National Parks people. The other trip was a four wheel drive bash along the Old Coast Road to Bemm River where we had a picnic on a cold, wet miserable day. Most of the kids got into either Andy's, Leo's or Peter's Toorak Tractors and bounced their way through the bush.

I was quite happy to take the green monster around the long way.

It's funny in a way, the Marlo Christmas Trip will probably be remembered as one big disaster but you ask the kids, nearly twenty of them had a great time like



they always do. (Especially at Easter). Also the adults enjoyed the company - we played a bit of cricket, tennis, swam in the pool, went for a few runs and walks, drank Pully's cheap beer, I cant even remember one argument before Paul Sier arrived later in the trip! Other snippets of interest: Pat's new expensive tent leaked like a sieve, Lesley forgot to pack both the gas bottles and Leo had the best chunder I'd ever seen since the classic he let fly back in the Goulbourn River on the 1976 Tube trip!

The New Years Eve entertainment started at the Marlo pub with a reasonable meal about 6pm. Then on came the band, then the cops, then the local yobbos from everywhere and then the rain so we continued on back to the camp until after 2am. Besides with Pully and Big Mick entertaining the entire camp with a repertoire of golden oldies that lasted for the next three nights. How on earth do they remember them all!

When we left Marlo we headed off to the shores of Lake Jindabyne for a couple of days before being blown out by 100kmh winds. We did manage to go on to the Ski-Tube to Perisher and Mt Blue Cow where it was minus 12C and you could lean over into the wind - this was in January with plenty of snow on the peaks. From there we headed on to Canberra passing one bushfire on the way where we had 6 days seeing the National Capital where in contrast to Marlo it was perfect 15-28C each day then home after a couple of days in Wagga Wagga. Hope all my Fathoms readers had just as much fun as we did these holidays, only if they only dive once like I did!

THE VICTORIAN UNDERWATER FESTIVAL

DES WILLIAMS

On Saturday 27th November 1993, a revival of the old "OCEANS" type underwater festivals was organized by Tony Davis. Years ago when Tony was very young and excited at the prospect of taking up scuba diving, he was drawn to the annual "OCEANS" Conferences, as indeed were many of us. The traditional M.C was Reg Lipson and a master pass to the entire conference was only a few dollars.

Then along came the vast commercial interests who changed the conference into a marketing spectacular and suddenly a master pass was about \$80 for the 1 1/2 days. Attendances dropped off and the conference was moved to Sydney with the excuse that the Melbourne diving community were a lousy bunch.

The fact was, the conference had become too expensive. So this year, this fact was proved when Tony Davis re-organized the old style conference at \$10 per ticket. His slogan was "Because diving was meant to be fun, not expensive" And the people turned up in droves to listen to the fine speakers such as Ian Lewis, Stan Bugg, Jack Loney, Belinda Barnes, Des Walters, John Lippman so capably introduced by Reg Lipson in his usual role as M.C.

The whole day was a dose of *deja vu* for me, to sit back and be entertained by such interesting and capable speakers. We broke for dinner at the local pub in Chapel St as the conference was held at the Prahan Town Hall, and returned to a packed hall at 8pm to enjoy a fine film/slide presentation by Liz and Andrew Wright on cave diving Nullarbor Plain and Mexico, Great White Shark hunting and diving in Canada's British Columbia.

This was followed by the keynote speaker Bob Talbot from the U.S.A, famous for his posters of dolphins in the wild. He was also responsible for the marine photography for the movie "Free Willy", which is currently playing around the world. In all a great 12 hours entertainment. A few V.S.A.Gers were there: Williams, Blanchard, Vleugal, Luxford and Cardinaletti.

Lets hope Tony gets it together again in 1994.

V.S.A.G. CHRISTMAS TRIP 1993/94

MICK JEACLE

Arriving at Burbang Adventure Caravan Park in Cape Conran on Christmas day, we were greeted with beautiful sunshine and the temperature was very warm indeed. With this in mind, we spent some choosing a nice spacious, shady site to give us some protection from the heat which is normally expected there at this time of the year. We needn't have bothered as it turned out.

During the evening we enjoyed Christmas dinner outdoors with Sally and Sant and Dave and Franca Machen, and we contemplated the great days ahead.

The disappointment commenced the very next day as we woke to steady rain. This kept up virtually all day as members of the group toiled to erect their camps in less than pleasant conditions.

It was to be more than a week before we finally hit the water and ventured out to Beware Reef on relatively calm seas.

The conditions were near perfect, warm, sunny and ideal seas. The diving was as good as can be expected given the rain and windy conditions experienced during the previous week. Some of the group dived on of the wrecks and reported great fish life and colour that is typical of this area.

As the day went on it became very hot in the boats, and it was necessary to jump in to obtain relief from time to time.

Just as we set off for the ramp, the winds swung around and whipped the seas into a stiff chop in a matter of seconds, which is also typical of this area. However, it did not present a problem and we arrived back at the ramp with a minimum of fuss.

This was to be our last outing unfortunately. The winds returned and the seas were very big indeed from then on.

However, we did manage to get in a few other activities, some of which were:

- A visit to the Buchan Caves.
- A great 4 wheel drive adventure along a very rough track with a Vic Roads sign at the entrance indication "Road Closed".

- A visit to Bemm River.
- A visit to Mallocoota.
- Untold visits to Orbost.
- New Years Eve at the Marlo Hotel.
- New Years Eve at the Vleugel tent.
- Surf Fishing.
- Visits to the beach.
- Boat Fishing.
- A Singalong night. (Thanks Bernice for the Guitar accompaniment)

One gratifying thought is that the poor conditions were very wide spread. Rob McLaughlan in Peuong S.A. advised me recently that it was hopeless over that way as well.

This was probably the worst Christmas trip for diving so far experienced by VSAG. At least you can't claim a worse one Tony. But diving aside, the VSAG Camaraderie was once again a feature of the trip, with everyone getting along famously.

Thanks Peter, Leo and Andy for the 4 wheel drive tour. Thanks Bazza for bringing your boat.

Thanks to all that attended for your company and your kind resolve in not blaming the poor conditions and lack of diving on the D.C.

Lets hope next year will be more kind to us, at a new destination, which is yet to be decided.

DECO STOPS

MICK JEACLE

- Leo Maybus made best use of his 4 Wheel drive whilst at Cape Conran. He had a smile from ear to ear when he completed some 30 kilometers of bush bashing. The smile turned into a look of dismay when he learned his youngest unmarried daughter had informed mum by phone that dad had scratched her pride and joy.
- Peter Vleugel did the same in Chris' nice new Toyota Landcruiser. Chris didn't mind the scratches so much when Peter backed into a tree causing some \$2000 worth of damage to the lower tailgate, my guess is that she was far from impressed.

Maybe you should install a bullbar on the back Peter?

- No flies on Jack Namiota and wife Julie. They arrived in the rain and therefore booked into a caravan at Orbost to stay the night. When rained out the following night in their tent, they moved back to the caravan again until the rain stopped. Don't read this Annie.

- Pat Reynolds was very proud of his, nice new dome tent.

Don't try and enter unless you take your shoes (or thongs) off first. Seems he didn't weatherproof the seams as directed in the instructions because no material was supplied with the tent. Following a night of heavy rain and a wet bed, he was cursing everyone from the manufacturer to the salesman.

It's obvious Tony Tipping does all the grocery shopping at home. He knows the price of everything. However, he forgets to allow for the fact that prices aren't the same as they are in Balwyn whilst shopping in Orbost.

He was funny as a hatful as he strolled around the Orbost supermarket muttering "Rip-off! Rip-off!" Maaarrg simply shakes her head.

- Good to see Paul Tipping has not misplaced his favorite Buddy Holly Tape. The sight of him strumming the tent poles whilst packing up the camp is a sight to behold. I dont think he's worked out why he takes about an hour longer at the job than anyone else, after all these years.

Keep it up mate.

• Good to see Paul Seir and Gail made the trip for a couple of days. I think he must have been under some sort of orders not to act up too much this year as he was very sedate. How did you do it Gail?

By the way Paul, where did you store that oil skin coat?

Everyone on the trip would like the answer to that one.

• Gail and Andy were in for a busy holiday. After a week at Cape Conran it was back home again to load some gear, then a long drive to Fraser Island in Queensland. Not what you'd call a relaxing holiday but at least they had time up their sleeve as Andy was not due back at work until 1/2/94.

• It was a costly sojourn for the boat owners at Christmas. Yours truly required a new battery (\$120) and Bazza had to install a new steering cable (\$158). When queried how long the old cable had been in use we were amazed to find it was 17 years old. Can't complain about that eh, Bazz?

• Leo Maybus appeared absolutely devastated whilst standing on the boat on the one day we did get out on a dive. Investigation revealed he had somehow dropped his tank in 80 feet of water, complete with face mask, regulator, computer etc. He appeared somewhat hopeful when Bazza, who was unaware of his plight, surfaced some 10 minutes later. The conversation went somewhat like this:-

Leo: "Did you see anything Bazz?"

Bazza: "No...(Pause)....Only this flamin tank!"

The familiar smile suddenly returned and it was bigger than ever.

• Whilst taking notes for deco stops one day, I mentioned to Neville Viapree that he would have to be included.

"What for?" he said "I dont say nothin' I dont do nothin'"

Well Nev, that was just enough to get you in.

• Mick Jackiw was sighted on the Bay recently cruising around on taxpayers money with a fisheries officer. It seems that the departments have amalgamated and we can expect to see our old mate enjoying this role on a regular basis.

Remember your mates eh Mick!*

REG LIPSON'S SEA STUDIES SERVICES

DES WILLIAMS

I have just received a complete list of the great Marine Life Study Courses currently on offer by Reg and Kay Lipson. There is a great variety of specialist courses, so if you would like more information and a copy of the programme please contact Des Williams on:

551 3201

We have all seen Reg in action at a couple of our meetings over the years, so now is a chance to enjoy one of the now famous classes about our fascinating marine life. You will have a great time.

DES WILLIAMS

DECEMBER DIVING

DON ABELL

Saturday 11th December blew a gale so I was sure that the dive for the following day would be cancelled. I was equally sure that my night would be telephone free.

Not the case! We do have some desperate divers in VSAG and there were a couple who had been dreaming about crayfish for Christmas dinner. In the end I blame Ross Luxford. If he hadn't wanted a day on the bay I would have had only one boat and cancelled on the pretext of safety. But no Ross wanted to launch.

Here followeth the conversation by telephone at 9.00pm Saturday night:

Don: How are you Rossy?

Ross: Good mate but you'll have to be quick, I just put dinner on the barby.

Don: Do you still want to go tomorrow?

Ross: What's the weather forecast?

Don: Lousy

Ross: What do you think the diving will be like?

Don: Lousy

Ross: Any keen divers?

Don: I am sure they would be happy to stay home. I don't think anyone really wants to dive. I know I wouldn't dive if I wasn't dive captain.

Ross: What do you think we should do?

Don: Cancel

Ross: No. Lets do it.

Don: (After appropriate pause thinking that I had obviously been to subtle so far)

Ross: It's Ok. I don't want to go diving I just want to test the new steering on the boat.

So two boats and seven divers launched from a very impressive new boat ramp at Sorrento. Mr Reynolds had problems with the limo so he didn't make the start.

J.L.'s wouldn't turnover so he nearly didn't make the start. With a lot of work and help from all concerned we finally left at 11.00am two hours behind the scheduled time.

First dive was in the heads. Bazza and Rob Birtles had a good dive in Beautiful Territory. Doug and I found kelp and too much of it. Surprisingly the visibility was not bad at about thirty feet and water temp was Ok as well. I felt crook after my dive but Bazza and Rob raved about the Territory.

We dropped Ross and J.L. in to have a look. In the ten minutes that they were down, the southerly front hit and the waves went from 1 to 3 meters. Luckily the divers surfaced as they realized they were going south. We got them up quickly and got out of there. They showed good sense in surfacing. I would not like to have been recovering them in the middle of the rip.

Ross and J.L. were relocated off Queenscliffe for an ordinary dive. Neville looked a little green around the gills. I asked him how he felt but when he opened his mouth to answer, it was not words that gushed forth.

A simple dive on the scallop beds finished the day. Good size and plentiful. I am sure it has been a good year since my last meal of fresh scallops.

A day which was not outstanding, but a lot better than I had expected 24 hours earlier.

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

November 8, 1993.

MOVE TO SAVE GREENLIP ABALONE

The Minister for Natural Resources, Geoff Coleman, has taken action today, to protect Victoria's stocks of the valuable Greenlip abalone reported to be in a decline.

Regulations put into place now have instituted a closed season from October 1 until March 31 of each year. Outside this period, a limit of two greenlip abalone per person per day may be taken.

The closed season for this year will begin Wednesday, November 10, 1993.

Mr Coleman said "Victoria has two separate stocks of abalone - greenlip and blacklip. Blacklip abalone is much more abundant and makes up 99 percent of commercial fishers' catch."

"Victorian Fisheries' officers have found that there is an increasing pressure on the greenlip stocks from some recreational fishers who are exploiting the current regulations by taking to sell."

"With new regulations Victorian Fisheries and Wildlife officers will be maintaining an even closer surveillance of the abalone fishery," he said.

The Victorian Fishing Industry Federation and the Victorian Abalone Sub Committee have fully supported the move by the Minister to protect the Industry. Greenlip abalone are much larger than the common blacklip, and can weigh up to a kilogram.

They are also prone to overfishing because of their tendency to aggregate during the spawning period from October to March each year.

Mr Coleman said overseas experience has shown that greenlip abalone was very slow to recover when overfished.

"That's why we have treated this as a matter of great urgency in a bid to protect

what is most valuable commercial and recreational resource," he said

Media Enquiries: Liz Brown, Media Liaison Officer, Victorian Fisheries Ph: (03) 412 4727. Press Secretary, Jamie Catlin, Ph: (03) 651 0134.



GREENLIP ABALONE BAG LIMIT AND CLOSED SEASON

A closed season and an amended bag limit have been introduced for the taking of greenlip abalone from Victorian waters. The new bag limit applies to recreational fishers. The closed season applies to both commercial and recreational fishers.

Bag Limit:

Two (2) greenlip abalones per person per day for recreational fishers during the open season of 1 April to 30 September.

Previously, recreational fishers could take a maximum of ten (10) abalone per day, either blacklip abalone only or greenlip abalone only or a combination of both species.

The total bag limit remains at ten (10) abalone per day, but only two of the abalone may be greenlip.

Closed Season:

A closed season on the taking of greenlip abalone by both commercial and recreational fishers from 1 October in each year to 31 March in the following year (both days inclusive)

Note: For 1993/94 the closed season commenced on 10 November 1993.



Greenlip abalone, *Haliotis laevigata*

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the regulations is to protect the greenlip abalone resource from over-fishing.

Victoria has two separate stocks of abalone - blacklip and greenlip abalone. Blacklip abalone is much more abundant than greenlip and it comprises 99% of the catch by commercial abalone fishermen. Greenlip abalone are much larger than blacklip, with each fish weighing up to 1 kilogram.



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES - Fisheries Branch

240 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne, Victoria, 3002, Telephone (03) 412 4011, Facsimile (03) 412 4623

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The following letter was produced by John Hawkins for the S.D.F.V on behalf of all the affiliated dive Clubs. It is a good example of the excellent work done by the S.D.F.V on your behalf. Please remember that the S.D.F.V is your voice line to make comment on matters which effect our great sport. Darren Salter who has chaired the S.D.F.V for some years now, puts much of his private time into the S.D.F.V as do the others on the management cell.

COPY OF THE LETTER TO MINISTER COLEMAN

The Honorable Geoff Coleman MLA,
Minister for Natural Resources,
7th Floor, 232 Victoria Parade
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

RE: Closed Season on Greenlip Abalone

Dear Minister,

On behalf of affiliated member SCUBA Clubs, the Scuba Divers Federation of Victoria (SDFV) finds it necessary to formally protest the way in which the recent closed season and reduced bag limit on Greenlip Abalone was invoked. The SDFV believes the matter was poorly publicised, and appears to favor commercial fishers while unfairly penalizing the vast majority of recreational fishers. It is not consistent with the professional approach to these sorts of issues taken by the department of Conservation and Natural resources in the past.

Firstly, the SDFV believe there was inadequate effort of the part of your Department to make it known that the closed season was in force. The closed season commenced on 10 November 1993 and while some individuals may have been aware of the new regulations, it was not until late November that the SDFV was informed of the closed season via a mail-out of the Department's News and Victorian Fisheries Notes Leaflets. Most SCUBA divers belonging to Clubs affiliated SDFV could not have been made aware of the closed season and the new bag limits until the first or second week in December, 1993. Many recreational divers who fish for abalone may therefore been at risk inadvertently breaching the new regulations.

Secondly, the media release "News" from your Department dated 8/11/93 indicated that support for the new regulations has been solicited from the Victorian Fishing Industry Federation and the Victorian Abalone Sun Committee.

Yet, from the information in the same News sheet, it can be concluded that these two groups would not be significantly affected by the decision. It is the recreational Scuba Diving community most affected by this decision. The SDFV is unaware of any attempt by your Department to seek support, advice or input from any representative of recreational diving groups over this matter.

From the published information, the intent of move to introduce a closed season of taking of the Greenlip Abalone by all fishers, and a significant reduction in the daily catch allowable by recreational fishers was to:

- * Protect the resource, since it is prone to overfishing.
- * Curtail the activities of unscrupulous operators illegally exploiting the resource.

The SDFV understands the need for conservation measures and in the past has a good rapport with your Department over issues of resource regulation and management that effect recreational Scuba diving. The SDFV commends and supports efforts by your department which have been fair, equitable and necessary. However, in this case, the new regulations appear to be a "knee-jerk", poorly targeted solution to combat the activities of "Some recreational divers" thus unfairly penalizes the vast majority of recreational fishers. Given the lack of any new catch restrictions (Outside the close season) on commercial fishing, the SDFV has difficulty countering claims that you or your department has succumbed to pressure from commercial fishers to greatly reduce the recreational access to the fishery. Surely, if the attempt to protect the resource was genuine, a blanket moratorium on fishing of the resource would have been better, and certainly easier to police. Given that 99% of the commercial take is blacklip abalone, a ban a greenlip cannot represent such a commercial loss.

Since the new regulations do not specifically address the issue of recreational fishers selling their catch, it is assumed that your new regulations are meant to make it cumbersome and unproductive for recreational fishers to illegally exploit the resource. It is not clear that the closure and reduced bag limit will reduce the exploitation by recreational fishers, The SDFV is of the view that the new regulations are not the best action that could be taken to protect the stocks of greenlip abalone or that there were not other options available to you or your Department.

Yours sincerely

Dr John M. Hawkins

V.S.A.G. CHRISTMAS DIVE 1994

At the January Committee meeting, it was suggested that we look at the possible venue for our Christmas trip in December. Andy suggested that we take another look at possibly going to Forster/Tuncurry, which is about 33km north of Sydney. Roads to Sydney are first class these days and the ring road around Sydney means minimal delay as one proceeds north to Forster. More investigation will be made.

Des Williams is to look into the cost of taking a family and car to Tasmania for a camping/dive holiday. It is a while since we looked at the cost, so nothing ventured nothing gained. We would have to rely on local dive operators (Certainly NOT the one at Bichen!) to take us diving, and there are plenty of sites for all the family.

DIVER DEATH OFF THE PROM 9th APRIL 1992

I just couldn't resist including the following summary of the Coroners inquest into this incident. It would seem absolutely impossible to even IMAGINE that so many basic diving, boating, safety and common sense rules could be broken in one day's outing. But, these guys did and all for the sake of catching crayfish. Incidents like this, do the sport of diving no good at all:

Victim 36 years old unemployed. Three persons in a newly purchased 20yr old runabout, no safety gear, no flag, no radio, no rope no lights. They left Port Welshpool for the Glennies, time unknown because no watches. Rough trip 3+ hours. Intended to get crayfish (the area is a Marine Reserve). Used a hookah with a faulty exhaust/air connections and a single hose split at the bottom to two divers. CO2 at twice the acceptable level. Two divers down there were severely overweighted and no BCD, with knots in the air hose. One guy earlier did a free ascent because the split hose at the bottom didn't allow ascent with air. The deceased had completed only five dives prior to his death, depth and duration not known of dive because no watches or depth gauges. On the last dive he was exhausted and got caught in a current on the surface, could not get back to the boat. Boat would not start and anchor not able to be released. deceased not able to be revived because lack of knowledge of CPR. Rough conditions back to Welshpool in the dark. Diver died of haemorrhage of the brain caused by barotrauma. The deceased was the most experienced of the group with one diver only having dived on one occasion on tanks nine years before.

DIVE/SOCIAL CALENDAR

DATE	EVENT/LOCATION	DIVE CAPTAIN	MEET AT
13 Feb	Flinders	Pat Reynolds 789 1082	Flinders Pier 8.30am
17 Feb	General Meeting -Nth. Melbourne Football Club (Meet beforehand for dinner at the club)		8.00pm
27 Feb	"Rotomahana" wreck Ships Graveyard Experienced Divers Only	Leo Maybus 727 1568	Sorrento Boat Ramp 9.00am
12-13-14 March	Long Weekend at Walkerville-Waratah bay	Andy Mastrowicz 318 3986	
17 March	General Meeting (Guest Speaker) -North Melbourne Football Club (Meet beforehand for dinner at the club)	8.00pm	
27 March	Spectacular Reef	Alex Talay 867 8492	Sorrento Boat Ramp 9.00am
1,2,3,4 April	Easter at Wilsons Prom.	Don Abell 889 4415	
17 April	Flinders	Bob Scott 763 6872	9.30am Flinders Pier
21 April	General Meeting -Nth. Melbourne Football Club (Meet beforehand for dinner at the club)		8.00pm
1st May	Submarine Wreck	Pat Reynolds 789 1092	9.30am Sorrento