

# FATHOMS

Registered for posting  
as a publication Category B  
Print Post Approved  
PP332873/0035

EST. 1954



Safety in Diving

**\$2**

If undeliverable, return to  
Victorian Sub Aqua Group  
Box 2526W,  
GPO, Melbourne 3001



# VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

DEC-JAN  
97 98

# FATHOMS

Official journal of the *Victorian Sub - Aqua Group*

## In this issue:

DECEMBER/JANUARY 1998

V.S.A.G. Committee Members	2
Editorial	3
New Member Profile	5
New Member Profile	6
Tennis VSAG Style	7
Great Camping Moments	8
Dive Report - The Pinnacles	10
Dive Report - Eliza Ramsden	14
Dive Report - 90 foot Submarine	16
Case of the Hanging Monkey	17
Check & Safety Suggestions	20
Helmet Divers - Boot Scoot	25
Early Maritime Pioneers	27
Dive Report - Melbourne Cup Weekend	29
Tip's Tit-Bits	31
Reflections of King Island	32
Media Watch	34
Dive/Social Calendar	36
Tide tables - January/February 1998	38
Emergency Contact Information	40

### Next General Meetings:

Bells Hotel  
157 Moray Street (cnr. Coventry Street)  
South Melbourne - 8pm sharp!  
Thursday 15th January 1998  
Thursday 19th February 1998

### Next Committee Meetings:

Tuesday 20th January - Pat Reynold's home  
Tuesday 24th February - Bob Scott's home

### Editorial submissions to:

Mick Jeacle  
5 Donn Close  
Frankston Vic 3199  
Tel: (0359) 71 2786 (h)  
9554 0121 (w)  
9554 0144 (fax)

# V.S.A.G. COMMITTEE MEMBERS

A.C.N. 004 591 575

PRESIDENT:

Andy Mastrowicz  
15 Soudan Road,  
West Footscray, 3012.  
Telephone: 9318 3986 (H)  
9301 2410 (W)

SECRETARY:

Priya Cardinaletti  
10 Wells Ave,  
Boronia, 3155.  
Telephone: 9761 0960 (H)  
9344 5542 (W)

TREASURER:

Bob Scott  
1 Donn Close  
Frankston, 3199  
Telephone: 0359 712 206 (H)  
9706 7100 (W)

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Mick Jeacle  
5 Donn Close,  
Frankston, 3199.  
Telephone: 0359 712 786 (H)  
9554 0121 (W)

SOCIAL SECRETARY:

Kate Caine  
15 Valentine Avenue  
Kew, 3101  
Telephone: 9852 8028 (H)  
9244 0354 (W)

POINTS SCORER:

Peter Vleugel  
22 bay Road  
Mt. Martha, 3934  
Tel: 0359 743 200 (H)  
018 315 484 (W)

PUBLIC RELATIONS & MEETINGS CO-ORDINATOR:

Des Williams  
14 Dorrington Crt,  
Dingley Village, 3172.  
Telephone: 9551 3201 (H)  
9597 0777 (W)

VICE PRESIDENT:

Don Abell  
80 Liston Street,  
Burwood, 3125.  
Telephone: 9889 4415 (H)  
9288 6548 (W)

ASSISTANT SECRETARY:

Kate Caine  
15 Valentine Avenue  
Kew, 3101  
Telephone: 9852 8028 (H)  
9244 0354 (W)

ASSISTANT TREASURER:

Robert Birtles  
2 Balcome Court,  
Croydon, 3136,  
Telephone: 9725 2816 (H)  
9558 0122 (W)

ASSISTANT EDITOR:

John Lawler  
7 Cloris Avenue,  
Beaumaris, 3193.  
Telephone: 9589 4020 (H)  
0359 757 100 (W)

ASSISTANT SOCIAL SECRETARY:

Leo Maybus  
2 Olsen Close  
Mooroolbark, 3138,  
Telephone: 9727 1568 (H)  
018 375 102 (W)

SAFETY OFFICER:

Robert Birtles  
2 Balcome Court,  
Croydon, 3136,  
Telephone: 9725 2816 (H)  
9558 0122 (W)

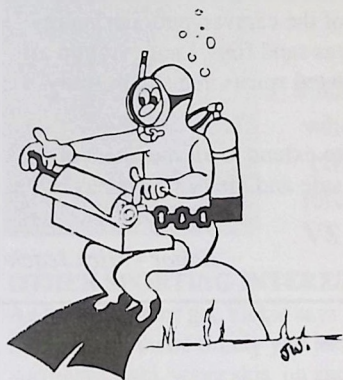
PROPERTY OFFICER:

Pat Reynolds  
14 Nurla Court,  
Frankston, 3199.  
Telephone: 9789 1092 (H)  
015 334 276 (W)

S.D.F. DELEGATES:

Andy Mastrowicz, Des Williams & John Lawler

## EDITORIAL



As I write this piece I realise that it is less than a month to Christmas, 1997. I know it's been said before, but just where has the year gone? The years sure fritter away as we get older, so one must make the most of them doing what we enjoy most - diving!

In this issue we welcome out two newest members - John Ashley and Gavan Wheelahan. These two fellows have been regular divers with VSAG and have submitted their profiles herein. Also John has submitted two articles already, one of which is included in this issue. Many thanks John, and yes I do want you to keep them coming.

Speaking of articles, I would also like to acknowledge the work of two other new scribes to FATHOMS, Andrea DeVries and Darren Pearce. That was some experience you endured Andrea, and Darren also shows excellent promise - so much so that I have unofficially appointed him my Junior Sub Editor. This of course means that I expect many more articles from you in future Darren, and also items for deco stops. I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge other articles from Pat Reynolds, another adventure story from Neville Viapree, a great contribution from Robert Birtles, the return of June Scott after many years, and of course regular contributor Des Williams. A lot of time and effort goes into compiling these articles for members' enjoyment, so please enjoy and let the scribes know that you appreciate their efforts.

Soon we will be off to Robe on our annual Christmas trip. VSAG will occupy some 18 sites and two cabins with a total of some 65 people attending. Andy Mastrowicz will arrange for some copies of the fishing regulations (SA) to be issued over there, as their laws are different to ours. In particular we must be aware of the regulations/bag limits for crayfish and abalone. For instance, there is

a boat limit for these species and the tails of crayfish must be docked immediately they are brought ashore or into the boat. The good news is that snares are legal in South Australia, so those who are interested should start making their implements now. My recollection of the caravan park during my short stay 2 years ago, on the downside that is, was sand flies. I suggest you all make up a 50/50 mix of citronella oil and methylated spirits in a small spray bottle and apply daily.

Finally, on behalf of the committee I would like to extend to all members of VSAG and their families and loved ones a very safe and merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

*Editor - Mick Jeacle.*

## **REMEMBER!**

**V.S.A.G GENERAL MEETINGS**

are on the

**THIRD THURSDAY OF THE MONTH!**

**AT BELLS HOTEL**

**CNR. MORAY & COVENTRY STREETS, SOUTH MELBOURNE**

*Make a note of these dates in your diary or calendar now.*

Thursday 20 November

Thursday 18 December (Drinks)

Come and enjoy a delicious meal before the meeting  
which commences at 8pm.



## NEW MEMBER PROFILE

**Gavan Wheelahan AGE: 33**

**FAMILY:** I have a lovely wife named Vicki who is a wonderful mother to our two sons christened Andrew (4) and Jack (2), since renamed Search and Destroy. potential new VSAG members should they live that long.

### **OTHER SPORTING INTERESTS/HOBBIES?**

As far as hobbies go, Vickie says I have far too many toys and nowhere near enough hours to use them. Surely you jest dear? Boat, fishing rods, golf clubs, kayak, surfboard, eski, water skis, oh and a bit of diving gear!

### **DETAILS OF EMPLOYMENT:**

I was once a butcher but am now a plumber and working on a Diploma of Building - go figure.

### **FAVOURITE DIVE SITES?**

I have had a wide range of diving exposure from the tropics to winter in Bass Strait, but to me there is nothing more exhilarating than coming up from the cold depths of Victorian ocean with a fresh crayfish for the pot. Although I must say, the last couple of wreck dives with VSAG have been memorable.

### **ANY PROPOSALS FOR NEW DIVE SITES?**

New dive sites.....I know a few members would have fond memories of an old one at Arch Rock down Venus Bay way.

### **HOW DID YOU COME TO JOIN VSAG?**

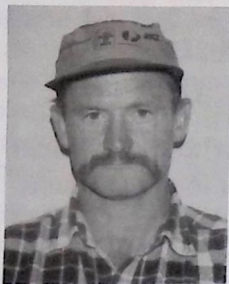
I was introduced to VSAG by Shane Martin after meeting at the local kinder; we're due to graduate any day now.

### **WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN A DIVE CLUB?**

What am I looking for in a dive club...hmm...deep!

I don't know really, I'm just coming along for the ride.

*Ed note - Thanks Gavan. Funnily, Ross Luxford commenced diving after meeting me at the local kinder. Hope to see you on many more dives - with your boat of course!*



## NEW MEMBER PROFILE

### John Ashley

**FAMILY:** I am married to Angela, my wife of 15 years and have four children. Kimberley 14, Brendan 12, Edward 7, and Pippa 5.

#### **HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN DIVING?**

I did my first scuba dive in 1975 on my 21st birthday, although I had been skin diving for a couple of years.

#### **OTHER SPORTING INTERESTS/HOBBIES.**

I played State squash for many years along with football (Aussie Rules). Now that I'm a bit older, ten pin bowling is the go; at least the ball comes back to you.

#### **DETAILS OF EMPLOYMENT.**

I own my own business - "Warburton Automatics" and since I started it I have never looked back.

#### **FAVOURITE DIVE SITES.**

Well, I have been to other countries on dive holidays but right here in Victoria I think we have got it all, apart from warm water. A good sub dive is hard to beat, and then there is good old Portsea Hole; because it's on our doorstep and is dived a lot, I think we forget just how good a dive it is.

#### **ANY PROPOSALS FOR NEW DIVE SITES/PLANS YOU COULD SUGGEST TO VSAG.**

The back beaches. A lot of club dives, because of the depth, give you limited bottom time, sometimes of 10 minutes. Along the ocean beaches say in 30 to 40 feet gives you an hour of diving in good terrain plus crayfish, abalone.

## HOW YOU CAME TO JOIN VSAG.

Mick Jackiw told me on a MHU field trip that VSAG was the only way to go. I put up with 12 months of crap with the mob I was diving with until one day I dived the Nepean Wall with VSAG and I think as the average age of members is closer to mine, it's always easier to relate to other members.

## WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN A DIVE CLUB?

A friendly atmosphere with no heroes. I was president of a dive club for three years and I know that a club with a good past has a great future.

*Ed note - Many thanks John. I'm sure you will fit in to VSAG quite well. Thanks for your recent articles, I've kept one for the next issue. The way you're going you'll give club member of the year award a shake.*

---

## TENNIS V.S.A.G. STYLE

BY JUNE SCOTT

We were off to the tennis as we have for the last 25 years or so , it was a lovely day a little over cast but it was going to get better.

When Bob and I got there only a few had arrived before us , Tony and son with mate ,Bazza and Marie , Paul and family.

Tony then said the kick off time was 10 o'clock and if anyone turned up after that they forfeited their chance to play. I was unable play because of a sore shoulder so Bob teamed up with Paul and they played Marie and Bazza. Well I thought poor old boys would get a thumping off Marie and Bazza and it would be all over in 5 minutes , but to my surprise the two old boys won and won well.

Well, we are on the shield Scotty, it's after 10 and no body has turned up, said Paul beaming all over his face. But to their annoyance, Tony extended the starting time for a few late comers , you could see the smiles drop as Marcus and David teamed up and beat and won the doubles trophy.

Paul and Bob cried crocodile tears for the rest of the day . ( never mind boys maybe next year or the next or the next !!!! )

It was a great day, thanks to Marie for organising the courts again and the Tipping boys for their organisation of the yearly event.



## *GREAT CAMPING MOMENTS*

BY ANDREA DEVRIES

Well if you're a "true-blue" Aussie its probable that you have had one! Yes, a GREAT CAMPING MOMENT.

A flood out, a bigger flood out, a wrong turn, flat tyres, arguments while setting up camp or neighbours that snore!!

One of our many great camping moments happened at my favourite camping spot, the Prom. It was our first cup weekend with VSAG and the weather was fantastic.

Our caravan seemed to be the local hangout once the sun had gone down for all the desperate and dateless. (VSAG has an abundance of these.) On the night in question Gerry had been making the reacquaintance of a certain James Beam. So once his pretty little drunk/unshaven head hit the pillow he was basically out cold.

In the middle of the night the annexe zip was suddenly unzipped to the top. I was awake. I felt around - my beloved was still comatose. Cameron and Ashley were both under three years of age and unless they had had a massive growth spurt since being put to bed they wouldn't be able to reach the zip at that height.

Then thud, the thing that unzipped the annexe was in and breathing heavily. Shit, what is it? A five foot wombat, no animal at the Prom. was that big. Pitch black. Why couldn't I turn the auto ignition gas light on? Where was the torch? Where was the shifter I kept under my pillow especially after doing the self defence course?

Can't find the torch. Heavy breathing AND IT AIN'T US! Can't turn the light on. Self defence forgotten. Pounding on Gerry's masculine chest - GEZ, WAKE UP!

Groggy and probably planets away my knight in shining armour awakes, well sort of.

GERRY WAKE UP - there's something in our tent. Gerry turns on the light. Illumination, my heart beating oh so quickly - IT'S ANOTHER WOMAN.

(Gerry's dreams have come true - or have they?) She's sprawled out over the box of fruit and stinks of booze. (I am surrounded by them.) Gerry, wearing nothing but his birthday suit, confronts the "sleeping beauty." I tell him to put some clothes on - so he dons a singlet (that makes all the difference) and just lets the family jewels hang on out - that's my man!

The woman was as comatose as Gerry had been and couldn't open her eyes (lucky) as Gez dragged her out kicking and screaming from our humble abode.

Out under the awning she was unceremoniously dumped. "Should I give her a doona - she might get cold?" asks Gerry, after she has trashed our place and cursed us in a drunken stupor. "The bitch gets nothing!" I explained, barricading our annexe with the fruit box and deck chairs in case she feels like making a last ditch effort to get back in.

No, she wasn't from the dive club and we never saw her again.

In retrospect, we thought we should have shoved her in Pat Reynolds' van and they could have woken wondering how each other got there. (Sorry Pat, but that would have been funny.)

Anyway, that was enough intrusion for one camping trip. Stay tuned for another installment of great camping moments - next issue. (If that's feasible.)



## **THE PINNACLES**

BY DARREN PEARCE

Early Sunday morning I was awoken by heavy rainfall belting down on the caravan I was staying in down Phillip Island. The thought of getting wet sounded pretty scary, but I was still keen and eager to take on the Pinnacles.

Even though it was still raining when I left to meet up with the group down at Newhaven, there was one good sign - no wind. So this meant that the pinnacles would be at its best for diving conditions.

When I had arrived down at Newhaven where Mick, John, Murray, Ted, Pat, Bob, Ross and Neville were already half geared up, dive captain Bob Scott allocated us the boats we were on. I was placed on John Lawler's boat where I also met up with another John who was on his second dive with the club.

No sooner had we launched the boats than we were off and running. The ride out to the pinnacles was a smooth easy ride. Mick had his trusty GPS which led us to the spot - maybe X did not quite mark the spot, but close enough. So then Mick and the others used the foolproof landmarks and soon we had come up on top of the pinnacles.

The water surrounding us looked nice and clear so this must mean excellent vis. John and I decided to gear up and go in first. As I was gearing up, I heard Murray scream in pain as he hit the cold water. I think Murray must have warm water syndrome. Still, John Lawler drove me and John over to Mick's boat where John and I hit the water.

We followed the anchor rope down until we hit the bottom at 90 feet. The vis. was excellent, at least 70 feet. John and I had a look at the deeper pinnacle first and I could not get over how much coral and life was growing on it and how rugged it looked.

Some of the things we saw were sea fans, soft sea sponges and other weird and colourful corals that I don't know the names of. We also saw the odd leather jacket and wrasse also hiding in the ledges one part of the dive.

Ross Luxford, who I came across on the top end of the pinnacle, had pulled out of a ledge what had seemed to be an asleep Port Jackson shark which looked a bit grumpy when woken up. Seeing Ross handle the reef shark was one of the highlights of the dive.

Another part of the dive I also found interesting was following the wall which was rich in growth of yellow zoathoks. Following this part of the wall made me feel like I was flying, but finally I had to return back to the boat. I still wanted to stay down longer, but time had ran out.

I then boarded John Lawler's boat. He was already geared up ready to go down with Pat Reynolds and two other divers. While John Lawler was diving, some of the others had surfaced also. We then sat and had lunch and later on John surfaced. Then we discussed whether to dive the Camode. We all had a vote and voted against diving the Camode.

By this time anyway the weather was closing in from a distance and it was also getting late in the day. We decided to go in close to Point Woolamai and have a dive in the bay where this might be prospective cray territory when cray season opens.

Mick's crew and Neville's crew decided to head home. John was trying to find this deep wall that he was telling us about which started at 40 feet and dropped off to 60 feet. John and I were already geared up. We hit the water and went straight down and headed South East until we came to where the wall gradually dropped off. The vis. Was not quite as good as the pinnacles - about 40 feet and there was more surge present.

The ground that we were looking around on was very rugged with lots of gutter ledge kelp and cracks which looked like cray territory. There was also reasonable marine life with heaps of abalone and leather jackets. Unfortunately, I did not see a cray (just to look at) but my other buddy John had spotted one or two along the dive. Maybe I was not looking hard enough. Towards the end of the dive I came across a Port Jackson shark which I pulled out from the ledge where it was hiding and gave it a pat. The skin felt very rough and rugged. I then let it go and watched it swim off.

We then surfaced. John Lawler picked us up and we headed back through San Remo where we encountered a huge school of dolphins heading out in Bass Strait through the San Remo channel. I reckon there would had to have been over one hundred dolphins. I have seen various schools of dolphins before but not as many as this.

Overall we had a great day. For the ones who did not come along, they never knew what they missed out on.

Hope to see you all next time.

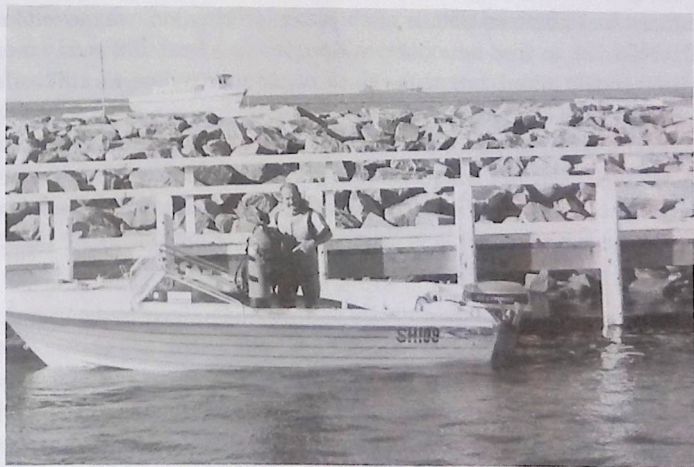
*Ed note. Thanks Darren for your first article. I really enjoyed it. I hope you can find the time to submit another article in the near future. Keep up the good work.*



*Gearing up for the Pinnacles - Phillip Island*



*J.L. & Co preparing for a drift off Queenscliff*



*New member John Ashley aboard his boat at Sorrento boat ramp  
(Photos courtesy of Darren Pearce)*



## *ELIZA RAMSDEN DIVE*

### *28 September 1997*

BY DES WILLIAMS

There is nothing that makes a dive more exciting and enjoyable than good visibility! And WOW did we get good viz on Sunday 28th September!!!

This dive was scheduled for the wreck of the old minesweeper GOORANGI in the south channel and Don Abell was our Dive Captain as Andy was unable to attend to that responsibility due to family commitments. Don came to my place and we set off together in my car on a beautiful sunny morning, arriving in time to have a relaxing coffee at the café at Sorrento aquarium, before meeting up with the rest of the crew at 9.45AM.

We had boats belonging to John Lawler, Peter Vleugel, Mick Jeacle and Gavan Wheelahan in attendance and about 15 divers in all. Thanks to the boys who brought their boats as this turned out to be a great day.

After Bob Scott had obtained details of shipping information, we moved in on the GOORANGI site to fine-tune our position. It was a beautiful sunny morning with very little traffic about, but as the slack water approached we still hadn't found the exact site of the wreck despite a dive done by John Ashley and Darren Pearce. So, as the water stopped, we made an executive decision to dash down to the ELIZA RAMSDEN site, where we found Yari from Sonar Wetsuits ready to dive the wreck. I was driving Gavan's boat with Gavan and Don fully suited up in the stern, so the boys were able to drop straight over the side as we passed over the wreck. The water looked very clean from the surface.

The other three boats dropped their divers and we hung about in the morning sunshine awaiting their return. After about 20 minutes, Don and Gavan surfaced reporting an excellent dive, which gave me the opportunity to suit up and jump in with Ross and Jeanette. As I hovered on the surface over the wreck, I couldn't believe my eyes as I looked down. Below me, there was the whole shipwreck in clear detail standing out in the bright morning sunshine!

We descended to the bow as the tide was still in slack water, as we paused to stare up in amazement at the towering bow of the ELIZA RAMSDEN above us. In such clear visibility the wonder of this 120 year old wreck really hit home. We have dived the site many times, but I have never had the good fortune to see the vessel in such wonderfully clear water. Some years ago, I dived the CITY OF LAUNCESTON site with the Maritime Historical Unit, in similar visibility conditions and the wreck presented a very similar sight to the RAMSDEN with her intact hull and raking clipper bow. There can't be many places in the world, where one can dive and see such a perfectly intact vessel's bow after 120-140 years on the seabed.

Ross, Jeanette and I made a very detailed inspection of the wreck, swimming firstly along the starboard side right in under the hull where the solid, perfectly intact keel could be clearly seen. Then around the stern section where heavy blasting was done back in the 1960's to reduce the wreck, this area is very tangled. Then, on into the hull, very leisurely inspecting the stacks of stone ballast still in position. Here we could look for some distance along the wreck in both directions, as plenty of fish swam about us. We passed the large hatchway towards the bow and grovelled deep down inside the bow and chain locker. Still the tide had not begun its run out again, so we dropped over the port bow back to the sand and it was here, at this point, I could see the M.H.U's concrete information plinth out on the sand about 80 ft away from the bow. This will give you some idea of the clarity of the water on this day. We swam over to the plinth to inspect the four information panels detailing the ship's wrecking back in 1875.

Then back over to the wreck for one last swim along the sand, down the portside, where it is possible to see some of the ship's large hull plates now coming loose, and they may soon drop to the sand. This is one of the most relaxing and pleasant dives I have done for a long time and I thank Jeanette and Ross for their company. We surfaced casually to find the other boats not far away and we were soon picked up. Thanks also to Don for organising such a great dive and to Gavan and the other boat owners for a memorable day indeed. I love these one-tank dive days in the cooler months!





## *90 FOOT SUB DIVE*

BY PAT REYNOLDS

Sorrento boat ramp 9.30 am 26 October, 1997. Upon arriving we were greeted by a group of anxious divers champing at the bit to depart. Twenty three divers and six boats, a fantastic turnout.

After allocating everyone to a boat and myself aboard the creme de la creme of boating, Vleugel's cruiser, (at my age you love a bit of comfort) we proceeded to launch.

It was a little bit bumpy in the bay but once outside reasonably calm. Mick put the GPS through its paces, followed by the flotilla. There were other boats already on the wreck (Ed note - but I still would have found it Ted!) so we sat back and awaited our turn to anchor.

Peter and Kate took the first dive, followed by Bob and myself. Visibility was fantastic, 70 feet, a great dive. Andy, our illustrious leader, showed his face for five minutes, circled around, but found the sea too rough and returned to the bay.

We agreed to head for Lonsdale Reef and dive the Holyhead and George Roper for our second dive. A nice shallow dive, also pristine visibility, fossicking through nooks and crannies. A great day's diving, thanks to boat owners.

P.S. for boat owners - Whilst diving the 90 foot sub. I heard a motor start up and ducked to avoid an anchor rocketing towards me which became solidly wedged in the wreck. In future, please retrieve the anchor after the last diver surfaces as the downside could have been a tragic result.

## *THE CASE OF THE HANGING MONKEY*

BY NEVILLE VIAPREE

It was Christmas eve 1965 and my old Battalion (1 Para) of the world famous Red Devil Paratroopers was at home in the U.K. on four weeks leave after having returned home from the Middle East where they had been fighting the local National Liberation Front in one of the Arab Kingdoms.

At about 6 pm on Christmas Eve every man received a telegram with a secret code word which was "Bruneval." This meant return to camp, draw your personal weapons and accept this invitation to partake of more war type activities ..... immediately! Within 48 hours the guys were de-planing from C-130's back into the desert to conduct search and destroy patrols against the N.L.F. who had made mince meat out of the normal British soldiers and become altogether too cheeky.

Naturally the guys were still upset and "cheesed off" about missing Christmas Day with their families and girlfriends etc.. It came as a further blow to morale when one of the most popular and well known characters in the battalion copped a sniper shot straight through the head.

The Para Regiment was world famous for its lack of sensitivity and was well known for its inhumane reputation, however, on the day of Calver's death not a single man ate lunch that day and in a rare case for the British Class system commissioned officers joined the men and elected not to eat lunch.. The mess halls and diners were empty that lunchtime, this was indeed a rare and unprecedented display of human characteristics for paratroopers.

However, there's an old saying that "there always has to be one in every crowd," and sure enough, an upper class toffee nosed young captain turns up to the officer's diner and completely alone tucks into and demolishes a hearty lunch fit for a King's dinner. In true paratrooper fashion he showed no embarrassment, compassion, regret or remorse and displayed no concern whatsoever. Now this

did peeve a few people right off. To deliberately upset your colleagues in an area of active service can be a health hazard and people have been known to have all sorts of nasty unfortunate "accidents."

Young Captain Jones was an old sweat and had seen active service in this place before. In his previous time here, he had acquired a pet monkey. Now this was no soft, cuddly, sweet or cute creature. It was foul, nasty, vicious, dangerous, disease ridden, it bit and would tear you open to the bone. It stank worse than death itself, it wanted to attack and kill everything that came into its sight, and had sexual ambitions that would shock, sicken and disgust even the most hardened VSAG members. It was a son of Lucifer, an evil child of the devil. Perhaps an ideal pet for a paratrooper.

Naturally everybody hated it and was terrified of it, except for its owner, young Captain Jones who loved it with all his heart and cherished it dearly. Now it would seem obvious that young Captain Jones was a "marked man" and bound to suffer "payback time" sooner or later. It came sooner the very next morning as hungry paratroopers strolled to the mess hall for breakfast. The monkey was seen unceremoniously hanging from the camp water tower - lynched like an old English highwayman.

Everybody knew who its owner had been and burst into hysterical laughter. Shortly after young Mr Jones appeared to find out what all the commotion was about. He nearly burst into tears and was so upset he couldn't eat for three days.

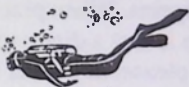
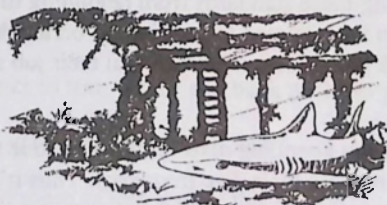
I wonder if he finished the next meal with a banana sundae?

# Philippines Expedition



Join *Vic Sub Aqua Club* for an unforgettable adventure in the Philippines. Dive the famous wrecks of Coron, and the fabulous reefs of Palawan and Bohol.

**DEPARTS MELBOURNE 28 APRIL 98**



**REEF  
&  
WRECKS**

Your holiday includes:

- ◆ Return airtravel from Melbourne
- ◆ 9 Nights Koksnuks Resort with all meals
- ◆ 4 Nights Bohol Beach Club
- ◆ 22 dive package (tanks/weights/airfills)
- ◆ 1 Night Bayview Park - Manila
- ◆ All airport transfers/Aust Departure Tax

Accommodation based on twin share

only.

**\$2275 per diver**  
**\$1650 per non diver**

*Prices subject to change without notice*

**For more information contact**

**Vic Sub Aqua Club**  
call

**Pat Reynolds on 9789 1092**



**Allways Dive Expeditions**

168 High Street  
ASHBURTON VIC 3147  
TEL 03 9885 8863  
FAX 03 9885 1164  
Toll Free 1800 338 239  
Lic No. 30524

Member AITA & IATA

## ***CHECK & SAFETY SUGGESTIONS***

BY ROBERT BIRTLES - SAFETY OFFICER

VSAG has always been and remains a very positive and safety conscious dive club. Self regulation has led to a package of standards not only required to become a club member, but to maintain safety levels of active divers whose individual actions can affect us all. These standards involve numerous committee and member actions which ensure our safety level is beyond what the dive industry expects. When practising these standards from beginning to end, the bottom line is that a dive captain is appointed to be director on the day. No arguments please, as his/her task is no fun considering that their job started 24 hours before the actual dive.

It goes without saying that members attending dive venues will (due to improving weather conditions) increase their dive frequency. Thus it's timely that we all devote some valuable time in preparation/review of our dive gear, group dive procedures, boats, and most important - our personal fitness. Sounds bloody good so far.

**Dive equipment** : Is our life support system. Is there need to say more, but I will. It goes without saying, all pieces should be thoroughly checked for defects which in part, individuals can do themselves. However, it's my suggestion that those sensitive mechanical pieces should be professionally evaluated. Naturally, expense is a factor and may act as a deterrent. Should this be the case, cast your minds back to those small incidents we've witnessed or experienced. Maybe we laughed on the day, but that smile could have been otherwise.

Allwoods Breathing Services can be of great service (even lessen the pain) in preparing us for the summer season. Allwoods' telephone number is 9725 1577.

As our membership has dramatically grown over the last 24 months (something is right) it's worth a reminder for those participating in club dives, that they are required to have a functional octopus regulator and safety sausage. Not to mention functional everything else.

Before the season really hits, do yourself a favour and conduct a personal gear check so that:-

You gain the maximum from your dives.

You're with us for seasons to come.

You don't stuff up for the rest of us.

### **Areas to consider:**

- Are your tanks in test, valves and back packs in good working order?
- Does your wetsuit still fit, does it leak?
- Do you need more or less weight this season?
- Are your regulators and buoyancy compensators in excellent working condition?
- Have your mask, snorkel & fins deteriorated since you last dived?
- Are your toys in working order? E.G. torches, cameras, catchbag & pleasure aides.
- Have you pieced together a basic repair kit?
- Do you have a suitable hat and lots of sun block?
- Have you a shower/wind break jacket?
- Are last season's sandwiches (still in the lunch box) still edible?

I'm sure there are other areas to consider, but the above will do for starters.

**Boats :** Members rely heavily on our boat owners as they provide our flexibility with regards dive venues, thus freedom & choice of diving.

They have invested large sums of capital not only in the initial boat purchase, but in equipment necessary to support carefree dive days.

Our captains (they love to hear this - in fact often) are all gear and safety conscious thus keeping their boats in good working condition through regular checks concerning electronics, engines, fuel and steering systems, radios, batteries, ropes, floats, trailers etc.

Their units are not only required to be sea worthy, but also road worthy as trailers are an integral part of the package. As none of this comes cheap, we can show our appreciation by assisting them through making ourselves known and offering any technical knowhow we may have, or supplier/repairer contacts who offer good service and parts at competitive prices. Collectively, we have the talent and contacts to be of real benefit in this regard.

**Group Diving :** Nothing stuffs a dive more than when all aren't on the same thought pattern. Before diving, try and review understandings with your dive partner as well as with those remaining in the boat. Doesn't it piss you off when on a drift dive, you spot something interesting, signal your mate, plant the drift line, explore the immediate area, return to the drift line anchor point and it's gone. So is your buddy, who has picked up the line and proceeded without you.

Another favourite of mine is control of drift lines. Share the job of towing and anchoring it, Not to mention when surfacing, take up the slack so that it doesn't tangle the prop. Simple stuff, but it happens constantly.

Also those remaining in the boat tend to lose focus on divers still below. How often do we start looking for divers about 30 - 40 minutes after they have entered the water? During surface time the remaining crew may be mouthing off, stuffing their faces, relieving themselves etc., forgetting that divers may abort their dive and surface early. We all know (or should know) that upon

surfacing in current we drift fast, thus it doesn't take long to drift out of the immediate area.

Radio procedures and frequencies is another area that we all should be well aware of. Boat owners are well versed in this regard, however may be diving when the need for a radio arises. Similarly in regard to boat handling skills. Apart from the skipper, a competent boat handler should remain in the boat at all times. In other words, the skipper's skills need to be duplicated.

**Health :** Of course, this is a personal topic but it's certainly worth mentioning. As the years creep by or we've experienced some ailments during the year, it's worth assessing your fitness level of the day. Gauge what you're capable of and dive to that limit. Of course the rest of us will hang shit on you but at least you'll be around to retaliate.

**Dive Captains :** Essentially, this person is our director of the day. He/she coordinates the dive and makes final adjustments at the boat ramp and dive site. Numerous factors will effect the safety of dives such as weather condition, the dive site, personal equipment, boats and who's hung over on the day. The captain retains the right to adjust the dive to a satisfactory standard. Don't give them a hard time when they are exercising their responsibility. Well, maybe just a little. Remember, you may be the next dive captain.

**Summary :** Whilst writing these words of wisdom, I couldn't help but think what a hypocrite I am. Seriously though, much of what has been preached is emphasised during cave diving courses. As much as I hate to admit it, these courses place a high emphasis on safety and gear as well as teaching you more finesse with your dive technique. To just practise their standards would achieve much of what this article is about.

Those who have completed a cave diving course will know that the cost of the course was just the beginning. In my case, the cost of getting my gear up to scratch exceeded the cost of the course. However my gear is up to scratch and that gives me warm and comforting feelings. I didn't have a choice, but the



purpose of this article is to prompt you into making your own choice. Please consider, then do yourself and us a favour by conducting a gear check. Also don't forget to assess your own personal well being (a short arm inspection would suffice.)

Finally, appreciation and consideration for boat owners and dive captains. After a period of time we could tend to take them for granted. Remember, if they're happy we're safe. Sounds a bit selfish doesn't it?

**PS to Boat Owners :** Don't forget the oxygen bottle, extra snacks & drinks for your passengers, provide the black jelly beans, share your lunch, help us gear up, be last in, only piss over the side after consultation with the crew, consider doing your own deck work - in particular retrieve your own anchor, for once help launch, retrieve and then wash your own boat. Of course these aren't personal views, but points made during our last survey. I felt obliged to include these in the article.

**PPS to Dive Captains :** Stay home the night before a dive and be a good partner to your mate, ensure boat owners have the appropriate snacks and are aware of passenger expectations (as above.) Always allocate Birtles a seat (at the expense of others), don't be bulldozed by those seeking to control you, keel haul those who are late on dives. After that, who would want the job?

**PPPS to Divers :** At the end of each dive, be part of the clean up.

## Diving Historical Society Australia SE Asia's First Meeting HELMET DIVERS - BOOT SCOOT

BY DES WILLIAMS

To obtain some serious publicity for the newly formed Diving Historical Society Australia SE Asia, Bob Ramsay from Adelaide and John Allen in Melbourne planned to do something never done before.

The main objective was to bring public attention to the Society in an endeavour to increase membership and this crazy event certainly achieved its goal! On Saturday 11th October 1997, a mountain of antique dive gear was assembled at the Harold Holt Swim Centre in Glen Iris to perform the world's first underwater line dancing event. Divers had come from as far as Cairns, Sydney and Adelaide as well as many country Victorian locations with some fantastic old Hard Hat outfits. The gear varied from Russian, Chinese, British and American manufacture and all were in perfect working condition, if you are interested in old equipment then this was the place to be.



*Bob Ramsay, Event organiser on his 1944 U.S. Mark 5 Standard Dress*

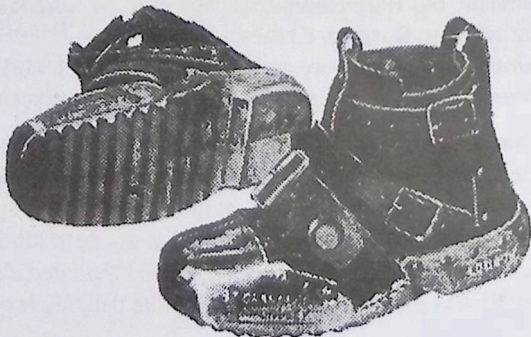
I had also been roped in by Bob and John to take on some of the organisation for the weekend, which began with a meal and drinks at Bell's Hotel on the Friday evening as divers arrived from the airport. Saturday morning began very early indeed with breakfast being served at the deep high-diving pool at the centre, as everyone unpacked vehicles which had travelled all night from interstate. By 10.30 AM a briefing was held and line dancing lessons commenced topside as

Cherine Stiller, of Stampede Line Dancing, ran the divers through their paces. Then it was helmets on as we lowered 10 fully suited standard dress divers into the pool for their 15 minute event. As the underwater amplifier twanged out a country and western tune the divers produced some brilliant steps in their 80kg outfits, much to the delight of the Channel 9 reporters for the In Melbourne Tonight Show. It really was a lot of fun and quite a family affair. By noon the record was in the bag and divers were out of the water looking for their bar-b-q lunch. We had brilliant sunny weather and really enjoyed ourselves. Then we took it in turns to suit up and take a dip in the pool in these historic outfits.

With the publicity part over, we all met again on the Sunday at the Polly Woodside Museum where we listened to some very interesting speakers, such as dive historian Jeff Maynard, dive gear pioneer retailer Bob Wallace-Mitchell and veteran World War 2 salvage diver Kevin Hood. Both Bob Wallace-Mitchell and Kevin Hood had some very interesting "hairy-chested" diving stories from the old days.

Now that the Diving Historical Society has got off to a good start in Melbourne we hope to meet again, maybe next time in Sydney and enjoy the company of others with a mutual interest. I met some very interesting people that weekend and look forward to their company again in the not too distant future. The attached photo is one I took of Bob Ramsay in his 1944 US Mark 5 standard dress, which was complete in every detail right down to the divers knife and underwater/topside telephone link. I had the pleasure of descending in this outfit later in the day and it was an exciting experience indeed.

Anyone interested in the further activities of the H.D.S should catch up with me at future meetings.



## ***EARLY MARITIME PIONEERS***

BY JOHN ASHLEY

When most divers think of going for a dive in the bay or along our coastline, we generally think of The Wall or the Coogee, or perhaps a good old cray bash. However, most of us are not aware of just how many "shipwrecks" that have actually occurred just in the bottom part of the Bay. Not only were there sailing ships of the past but also P & O liners such as the RMS Australia, 3,700 tons and wrecked in 1904 or perhaps the steam ship Time, 3,316 tons wrecked as late as 1949, and remaining intact on Point Nepean for more than ten years.

In the early years of the settlement at Port Phillip and Melbourne, most commodities and people arrived by ships, and most made it but some did not. A wreck in itself is a tragedy, not only for passengers and crew, but also for owners of the ship and the Melbourne merchants who had most of the money invested in cargoes that were on the ship.

Many people went bankrupt when ships sank, passengers sometimes lost all their possessions, and unfortunately, sometimes their lives. Imagine if you can, you are about to migrate to a new country, a new start for your family with hope for the future of a better life. You leave Liverpool, England and spend anywhere from 60 to 120 days crammed in a fairly small ship with no fresh foods and little space to move around. It's either too hot or too cold, always damp, even in the cabins, and at five o'clock in the morning with big seas running there is this almighty crash.

Going on deck is out of the question because of falling masts and spars and huge waves are breaking over the vessel, but the thought of staying below deck and drowning in the ever rising cold waters is equally as bad. There is panic. It's dark, bodies are floating, people are injured and children are crying. "Yes", shipwrecks are tragedies.

In 1848, the schooner Thetis bound from Sydney attempted to enter the heads

Friday the 26th of May and ran aground on the Lonsdale reef. As the ship was lying on its side, with the masts overhanging the main ordered the passengers and crew to work their way along the reef and were then taken to the inner reef by boat. An y coming to Melbourne to look for work lost both of their young drownd and shortly afterward died themselves of exposure, but so of broken hearts.

intention of the author to make people reading this story feel upse merely to point out the romantic days of sail was an illusion. It in d dangerous and credit must be given to those people who carved s in the sailing of these early vessels creating the great State that i toria.

n VSAG next dives on the Lonsdale or Nepean wrecks, spare a th se who sailed them and the effect that these wrecks must have had

ure editions of FATHOMS we will discuss individual wrecks and els in the Graveyard, so apart from just doing the diving on them, ch some history as well.



## MELBOURNE CUP WEEKEND

BY MICK JEACLE

This year VSAG did not schedule a trip away as in the past, despite the previous year's resounding success. This was attributable to lack of interest, and I guess this was due to the close proximity to the Christmas trip and the fact that some sixty people have booked for wonderful Robe in South Australia.

The Sunday dive was cancelled as the weather was not kind to us. The wind was from the South West, as was the case for some four days previously. However, it swung around to the South East during the day which enabled us to dive on Monday.

On that day, there were two boats (Jeacle/Lawler) and eight divers. I have constantly wondered when I have had the job of dive captain, just how the number of divers exactly match the capacity of the boats. Rarely have I had to turn away someone through lack of room, or indeed tell a boat owner to go home at home through lack of numbers.

Whilst the sea was a little lumpy in the bay, it was not a problem as we went out towards the Heads to survey the scene. For my part, I didn't need a great full distance as I could readily see the white water at Point Nepean, and as we got closer we saw that the surfers were enjoying waves of around two metres plus.

The horizon looked very lumpy indeed and a decision was soon reached to stay inside the bay.

It was a run-out tide, and the visibility looked to be around 30 feet just as we were washed of the propeller. However, on the last of the ebb tide, it appeared as if suddenly we were sitting in the middle of the Yarra as the visibility dropped rapidly to about 8 feet.

At this point we decided to retreat to Queenscliff and maybe contemplate a drift dive in that area. John Lawler did just that, but I wasn't impressed by the colour of the water and took leave to proceed to the scallop beds to gather some of these delightful shellfish to pickle for the Christmas holidays. JL chose to proceed to the Lonsdale Wall as John Ashley and Darren Pearce indicated a preference to dive that location.

We agreed to meet at the ramp following our dives.

Recent dives at the usual scallop beds off Rye have been fruitless. Accordingly we ventured to Dromana/McCrae where Bob Scott and I dived and collected about fifteen dozen fair sized specimens in forty foot of water in around fifty minutes. There were hundreds of small fry and millions of spat for future years. While we wait for them to grow, we should put in the work to locate better fishing grounds which will yield a consistent size to make it all worthwhile. I think maybe shallow water of around 20 feet, and much closer to shore may be the answer. I aim to find out in the not too distant future.

All in all, it wasn't a bad day, and after all it was just good to be out on the water.