

FATHOMS

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VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

APR-MAY 98

FATHOMS

Official journal of the *Victorian Sub - Aqua Group*

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Bells Hotel
157 Moray Street (cnr. Coventry Street)
South Melbourne - 8pm sharp!
Thursday 16th April 1998
Thursday 21st May 1998

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Tuesday 26th May - Leo Maybus's home

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EDITORIAL

As I write this I can hardly believe that one quarter of the year is all but over.

It seems no time that I and my family enjoyed New Year's Eve at Robe in South Australia.

Ah well, as long as one has his health it's no big deal that life seems to be slipping by at a great rate, as long as we can go diving. And diving we do best, albeit somewhat sparsely of late due to some inclement weather experienced on scheduled dive days due mainly to strong winds emanating from the South West - the diver's curse.

When we do get out, it sure is a pleasure to experience what must truly be one of the greatest sports known to man, with no

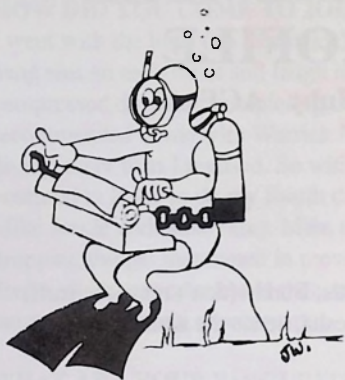
telephones ringing at 100 feet. To repeat the words of member Peter Vleugel - "You all should try it!"

In this issue we welcome two new members to VSAG - Dale Huby and Allan Sack. Welcome guys, thanks for your profiles and enjoy and use your new club as it is intended. That is, come diving and don't be afraid to voice your opinion, for better or for worse.

This issue is a bumper, thanks to all those scribes viz: Darren Pearce, Robert Birtles, Peter Vleugel, Ross Luxford, Stanley Crayfish, John Ashley, Josie Mare, Des Williams Chris Llewellyn and Alex Talay. Phew, this must be the record for member submissions, at least while I have been Editor, and for this I thank each and every one of you. This is what VSAG is all about, contributing and making the effort for the enjoyment of other members.

In my opinion, we now progress into the best time of the year for diving - autumn and early winter. This time of the year usually sees a lessening of the strong winds usually associated with summer in Melbourne which means more diving for us in calm conditions. So come on you lot, join the regulars. You should try it

Editor - Mick Jeacle





NEW MEMBER PROFILE

Dale Huby AGE: 41

MARITAL STATUS:

I live with my brother and our two Aussie Shepherds, Bundy (don't mind the stuff) and Furlsha. My brother has a daughter named Elesha, hence the name.

DETAILS OF EMPLOYMENT:

We have a business together in the printing industry, named Reddy Print Pty Ltd which is located in the Cheltenham district. Tom (Alex Talay) who most clubbies know, is also involved in the print industry, Print Buying Services Pty Ltd is his Company. Myself and Gary have been doing work for Tom's Company for many years.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO SCUBA DIVING?

I used to pick up work from Tom's office and noticed pictures on his wall of crazy people hanging off anchor ropes or waiting for a shark attack.(so I thought at the time) I have always loved the ocean and spent ten years in the Portsea S.L.S.C., but that was always on top of the water and we only wore speedos. Anyway, as years went on Tom got pissed off where he was and lucky for us moved in with Gary and myself. (I think it's because we don't mind a cold one and a man's not a camel.) Christmas 1996/97 Tom said get off your arse and come to Coff's Harbour for a couple of weeks and see what us divers do. After pitching tents underneath power lines so every bloody bird can crap on your borrowed tent, (sorry Mick) and the sun drag you out of bliss at ungodly hours of the morning, it was a good site. I later had to

move to the shade of a tree that I nearly had to fight for, there weren't many. You see I was not a diver then.

HOW DID YOU COME TO JOIN VSAG?

I went with the boys (no mermaids) on their first dive at Coff's, everyone seemed to hang shit on each other and laugh heaps, I thought there must be something in this compressed air. After completing the PADI open water dive course Tom recommended to me with Warrick McDonald up the road, there was more in this diving caper than I realised. So with the experience of Mike Nelson (Sea Hunt) I ventured to Robe to do my fourth dive and check out by two very experienced divers, Mike Jeacle and Alex Talay. Mike told me I could be a good diver once I stop dropping things; mentioned in previous Fathoms. I reckon I'm luckier than most divers, doing my course and then straight into a great dive club. I've already done more dives than my counterparts.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE DIVE SITES SO FAR?

I like all types of diving, except cave diving - not much fish life. Wrecks would be exciting, did the 90 foot sub. - great! So as you can see I am very new to this sport and I have enjoyed every dive I have done so far, keeps me out of the pub. As far as the club goes, I'm happy wherever we dive, looking for the odd cray and wrecks.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF VSAG?

Suits me fine. The VSAG is a very professional club run with safety, fun and good organising of dive outings. I feel quite confident when diving with fellow clubbies and hope to be as professional a diver and as safety conscious as the rest of the divers in the club. I must thank Tom for introducing me to diving and Mick and Ted for putting up with me while I'm broadening my dive experience. (and everyone else for that matter) I'm looking forward to Easter at The Prom, hope the weather is better than last year, very windy.



NEW MEMBER PROFILE

Allan Sack AGE: 47

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN DIVING?

As far as diving is concerned I'm a late starter. When as a guest of a group of divers at Refuge Cove "observing the first fleet laid up on their way to Melbourne from Sydney", snorkelling above several divers in perfect vis. I stated to myself - "I gotta get down there!"

AGE:

On my birth certificate it says November 1950 but I'm sure there has been a terrible mistake.

MARITAL STATUS, CHILDREN:

I'm married to Alison and have four children.

OTHER SPORTING INTERESTS/HOBBIES:

Other interests include - Nippers at Point Leo S.L.S.C. which has involved us every Sunday from Christmas to March this season and a couple of Saturday carnivals, but I suppose the kids need to learn sea safety before they can go diving. I have also been modifying my boat by adding a metre to the stem in the form of a diving platform but family, house extensions and business commitments have caused progress to slow somewhat.

DETAILS OF EMPLOYMENT:

My wife and I run a small engineering business in Pakenham, manufacturing and repairing in most things metal.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE DIVE SITES?

Favourite dive sites would include anywhere the water is still and clear, with good friends.

The Cooramba wreck search appeals to me as does any other lost or sunken treasures.

HOW DID YOU COME TO JOIN VSAG?

Well, Bobby Scott is the culprit. After attempting to mend/modify an old wetsuit he finally introduced me to a dive shop to purchase a new one. So if one has a good wetsuit, one may as well go diving eh?

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN A DIVE CLUB?

VSAG seems to me to be a very well run club with many active and not so active members from all backgrounds. I feel that anybody with webbed feet who can breathe compressed air will fit in very nicely.

ANY PROPOSALS FOR NEW DIVE SITES YOU COULD SUGGEST TO VSAG?

Seeing so many fine young specimens of manhood (personhood) in the club, I noted at the blood bank we can donate as a club. "What a TOP idea!"

March 1st clean up day -

Divers can retrieve items others only dream about. Another good idea perhaps for next year.

Don Under.

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 21 May

Thursday 18 June

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

THE BACK BEACHES

BY DARREN PEARCE



There is nothing like a good back beach dive when you get a decent Northerly wind, a fairly hot day and reasonable vis.

As I awoke from "Ashley Retreat" beach house this all became a reality, after inspecting the back beach and seeing how flat it was. I could not wait to get down to Sorrento ramp and meet up with the dive party.

John and I packed our dive gear and headed down to the ramp. I was surprised when we arrived down at Sorrento boat ramp as it did not look like Bourke Street. John Lawler was already down there, ready to launch his boat. Shortly after, the rest of the crew had arrived - Mick, Rob and Josie (who was about to do her first club dive with VSAG - look out, God help her!) also not forgetting Peter, Neville, Pat and Murray. Mick Jeacle was dive captain for that day and I was lucky enough to be on Mick's boat.

No sooner had we got the boats on the water than I was starting to feel the heat of the sun. The boat ride out through the heads was reasonably smooth. There was a lot of boating activity on the water that day.

We then headed east past London bridge until we passed the lookout at Sorrento back beach. We then plotted our spot and geared up quickly, ready to hit the relieving cool water of Bass Strait.

Mick hit the water first, followed by Josie, Rob and me. The vis. was fairly reasonable at about 30 feet, which I was surprised at since John Ashley told me that the vis. was poor at the same site the day before. Wow, awesome, diving at the back beaches does not get any better than this! Rugged, rough, heaps of swim-throughs and ledges to poke your head into with the odd cray appearing - somehow I kept on missing the buggers.

After surfacing an hour later we then motored over to St. Paul's beach, where we tied off on Pete's boat and had lunch. Robert Birtles entertained us with his funny

stories and jokes. Shortly after, we geared up again and were back into some serious diving. This dive site was even madder than the first one. There were even more swim-throughs than the first site and huge, huge bommies that were at least thirty feet high. I could not get over how much marine life was there. Leather jackets, sweep, wrass and magpie perch. One leather jacket looked like it was going to have a piece of my finger as I moved it through the water, at one stage I could almost touch it. I also spotted more crays. Having another go, I missed again and somehow I think they were laughing at me. I then surfaced an hour later.

Shortly after we headed for home. It was still stinking hot at about 40 degrees celsius so we decided to motor to Portsea beach to cool off. Portsea beach was fairly packed. I jumped into the water without my wetsuit top on and it was still warm. By this time it was getting late so we proceeded back to the ramp at Sorrento and Mick let me navigate the rest of the way home.

All in all we had an excellent day's diving and I was glad I was lucky enough to be diving that day.



Mick setting the scene



Peter trying to catch his lunch

SHIPWRECKS SEMINAR AUGUST 1998

Your lobby group, the Scuba Divers Federation of Victoria, is planning a one day seminar in conjunction with the Maritime Archeology Association of Victoria for August '98, with many guest speakers on the subject of shipwrecks.

The date is yet to be set, but you are advised for those interested. It is at least 15 years since I can remember such a seminar when the S.D.F.V held it at the Blackwood Hall at Monash. That event was very well attended, indeed.

So keep AUGUST '98 in mind, as the weather is usually poor for diving, so a relaxing days' entertainment could go down well. More details as they come to hand and we have a list of guest speakers we can advertise.

Your support for such privately organised information seminars is sought by the S.D.F.V and M.A.A.V.

KING ISLAND

BY ROBERT BIRTLES

Piece of a jig saw puzzle - quietly nestled in Bass Strait

27 km wide x 64 km long - population 2000 / well it was when we arrived

ARRIVAL	Relieved
DEPARTURE	To plan. Scotty was on time, Andy just made it.
CHARTER SKIPPER	Neil - Mick Jackiw's clone, minus the beard.
CHEESE	Ask Gerry.
DIVE BOAT	The best. 24 ft. tri hull - twin 200's.
DIVE TERRITORY	Sweet, easy, flexible and productive.
DIVE FREQUENCY	Dived 3 days of 4.
DIVE SAFETY	VSAG Safety Officer threatened and intimidated.
GOLF CLUB	Good meals/booze. Suitable for the VSAG geriatrics.
GOLF COURSE	On the day a wind swept maize. Never play golf with Gerry - he cheats and admits it.
NEWS	Sharks chase those whose wetsuits are minus a fly. Gerry DeVries had his wetsuit quickly returned after lending it on the second dive. Disgusting thought isn't it?
LOCALS	Easy going and pleasant people. Keen to promote tourism.
LAW	You go to them, they don't come to you.
MOTEL	King Island Boomerang/Currie. Perfect.
MOBILE PHONES.	No.
PUB	Good staging post. OK for Darren types.
PROMISE	I'm off the grog/with some exceptions - Gerry DeVries.
REPEAT	Definitely.

RETURN	Quiet and subdued - excess baggage.
SOUVENIRS	Ask Gerry.
SHIPWRECKS	Next trip.
SERVICE BEYOND CALL	Neil (skipper) washed our gear. Not once, but after all dives.
TOUR LEADER	(Scotty) June! Our hearts go out to you.
TOUR	Andy M - determined to add to his Christmas score.
PARTICIPANTS	Peter V - Joe Cool. Scotty B - Sweet young guy, butt of most jokes. Gerry D - Model visitor. Candidate for Vic Tourism. Darren P - Stood up to us all - surprised himself. Robert B - The most pleasant, amicable & caring of all.
TRAFFIC CONTROL	Nil.
TELLER MACHINES	No.
WALLABIES	Asphalt pate.
WILDLIFE	Fairy penguins, sea eagles, mutton birds, wrens, pheasant, peacocks, snakes, wallabies, turkeys, but no foxes or rabbits.
WEATHER	Friday 23rd Jan 98 - clear/sunny, Sat - clear/sunny, Sun - mild gale trying to mature, Mon - failed to mature, subsided in afternoon.
SUMMARY:	Can only be described as one of those magic weekends. All went to plan. If Scotty can arrange another trip be sure to put your hand up as it was as good as it gets. Even though Scotty won't attach special knee pads to my wetsuit (in fact he was quite insulted about my request/ maybe he was on his second shandy at the time) he deserves our thanks. We demonstrated our appreciation by helping him enter and exit the water at all times.



DIVE THE PINACLES (1/2/98)

BY PETER VLEUGEL

Sunday the 1st February arrived. The weather was fine and sunny, predicted temperature of 25, wind picking up from the SE at 15 knots and a sea breeze in the afternoon. The swell on the ocean was predicted to be 1.5m. There were 4 boats with 13 divers. Two boats launched at Newhaven by Mick Jeacle and John Lawler. I decided to launch my boat at Stony Point and Robert Swoffer did the same. The only oversight on that decision was that there was an angling competition on that day and when we arrived at Stony Point, the queue to launch was about 15 boats long, so it took quite some time to get to the water.

We headed to Newhaven to pick up the others and after getting everyone sorted out, we were making way under the San Remo bridge. All four boats punched their way to the dive site - The Pinnacles - about 2 km directly off Cape Woolamai, Melway map 432. The Pinnacles are a bommie that comes within about 10 m of the surface and drops to 40m at the bottom. It is an exciting dive on a good day and when the visibility is good, it's certainly worth the dive, with lots of marine life and other attractions. This particular day was all of the above conditions and a great dive was had by all.

The second dive after lunch was in a small bay under the cliffs of the Woolamai Reserve, which was a little sheltered from the swell and most divers had a second dive. After securing the equipment, we all headed back to San Remo and Newhaven. After dropping off two of my divers, Pat and I headed off to Stony Point with Robert Swoffer and his mate Colin. Back at Stony Point, it was hell with a queue of about 30 or so boats at the ramp waiting for trailers. Swoff didn't see the orderly queue and drove in from the other direction, backed up to the ramp, picked up his boat and was out of there. We had to wait about 1 hour before the trailer was in the water. This proves that ignorance is the best way to fly but I know that if I tried it, I would probably end up in a dispute with other boat owners, never mind.

We stopped at a small park near the Crib Point licensed grocer and sat under the shade with a few coldies and reflected on the fabulous day. I would like to thank all of the boat owners and participants in another fine, enjoyable VSAG dive activity. You should all try it.



BICHENO DIVING
Centre of Tasmania's East coast
Wednesday, Thursday 21/22 January 1998

BY ROSS LUXFORD

With Don Abell preparing for his annual pilgrimage to Hobart for the Hobart Cup, and myself heading to a family wedding, it took very little persuasion for Don and I to go a couple of days early and fit in two days, four dives, at Bicheno. Then back to Hobart to party - long lunches - Casino - wedding - Hobart Cup - BBQ's, a little drinking and Work??

Don will report on the partying and how I looked after him and tried to keep jim on the straight and narrow, before our families arrived for the social part of the weekend. Our diving was looked after by Tony and Rick from Bicheno Dive Centre. We dived from a Devil Cat with twin outboards. We would put our gear together at the dive centre and after a two and a half minute drive to the boat ramp in Waubs Gulch inside Governor Island at Bicheno, the longest was a seven and a half minute boat ride to the furthest dive site, a pinnacle in 30 plus metres. We did a 30 metre dive for around 30 minutes with stops each morning. Back for lunch and a sleep. Then a 20 metre dive for about 35 minutes with stops each afternoon. The dives were tops - look but don't take.

The last three dives were in Governor Island Marine Reserve between two and four minutes from the boat ramp. Bicheno's coast and under water scenery is very similar to Wilson's Promontory. Large caves and granite boulders and the main difference being crayfish each dive. On one dive we saw over 100 crays without counting. From small, tiny to "ten pounders" plus under every boulder. They were on the bottom, upside down on ceilings, on top of one another, they all knew it was a marine reserve - you could swim over and touch them! Our visibility ranged from 30 to 40 feet down to 15 to 20 feet. We saw lots of different types of fish - some very large long snouted boarfish, bull kelp, cray-weed, zoanths, basket stars, sponges, sea-whips and jewel anemone. Very pretty - lots to see, relaxfull easy diving.

Maybe next year we will need an extra couple of days to fit in Bicheno and then do a couple of days at Eaglehawk Neck.

LUCKY STAN

BY STANLEY FISH

I Stanley Crayfish do solemnly declare that the following story is a true account of a day's diving just a couple of years ago.

It was a great week, my boss had just given me a raise in pay for no apparent reason and the lazy bitch I was living with had found another boyfriend and had moved out, and I might add with my blessings. On the weekend the "Neptune Diving Club" were to dive the Cape Schanck area and as Sunday got closer the weather got warmer and the seas were getting flatter, but the best thing was we had two new divers, both women.

I often thought what a great thing it would be to be one of the few women divers in a largely single male environment. Being a horny person I would be in my element. On Saturday night, Theo, Ray and myself got thoroughly pissed, we camped at Cape Schanck for the night, sat around the campfire and told lies to each other about how many women we had had and how "you know" how big we were. These are the sorts of things that young unattached divers did from time to time.

Sunday morning dawned bright and sunny and after an early morning swim out to Pulpit Rock it was time to drive to Rosebud to buy breakfast, a hearty meal was to be had for the forthcoming dives. There at the big "M" we met up with the rest of the crew but no women. "SHIT" there was almost no reason to be there, I suppose 20 to 30 10lb crayfish would probably make the day a bit better. As I paid for breakfast with a \$20 note I was given change for a \$50 - "what luck" and I had even more luck a few minutes later when I was flashed by a speed camera. I went over to the police-person to explain that I didn't mean to speed and to my surprise it was an ex-girlfriend who still remembered the good times we had and let me go without a fine.

It was about 11am when we finally hit the water, we all went our separate ways and between eight of us we only managed 74 crays, a poor effort indeed for the

Schanck area and the expert quality of the divers on the day.

During my dive I surfaced briefly to check my position and noticed a small cave at the base of the Cape Schanck lighthouse. After my dive and by myself I walked along the rocky coastline back to the cave opening and to my surprise the small opening was in fact leading to a huge limestone cavern. Fortunately I had a good bright torch and as I entered the cave my eyes adjusted to its huge dimensions, it was about 100 feet high and 200 feet long.

I spent about thirty minutes looking around and just when I was about to leave I noticed what looked like the top corner of a chest partly buried in the corner. It took another 10 minutes to dig the chest out, my first thoughts were maybe it was "Benitos Treasure" but when I finally got the thing opened, all it contained was a ring and a piece of paper with foreign writing on it and some funny lines.

I needed to have a crap so I wiped my arse with it and was on my way, it was lucky really because while I was in the cave the Fisheries and Wildlife caught the other seven divers with their 74 crayfish.

Now I know that this story sounds like bullshit, but if you don't believe me next time you go to the Schanck go to the bottom and turn right into herd bay and keep walking about 500 metres until you see the cave. See if I'm not right.

WE ARE THE U.S. NAVY!

This is a transcript of an ACTUAL radio conversation of a U.S. naval ship with Canadian authorities off the coast of Newfoundland in October 1995.

Americans: Please divert your course 15 degrees to the North to avoid collision.

Canadians: Recommend you divert YOUR course 15 degrees to the South.

Americans: This is the Captain of a U.S. Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.

Canadians: No. I say again, you divert YOUR course.

Americans: THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER USS CORAL SEA. WE ARE A LARGE WARSHIP OF THE U.S. NAVY, DIVERT YOUR COURSE NOW!

Canadians: This is a lighthouse. YOUR CALL.

CLUB COMPRESSOR

Members will be aware that the club compressor has recently been fitted with a new petrol motor. Additionally, a new frame was fitted and the compressor sandblasted and painted to both preserve and beautify its appearance.

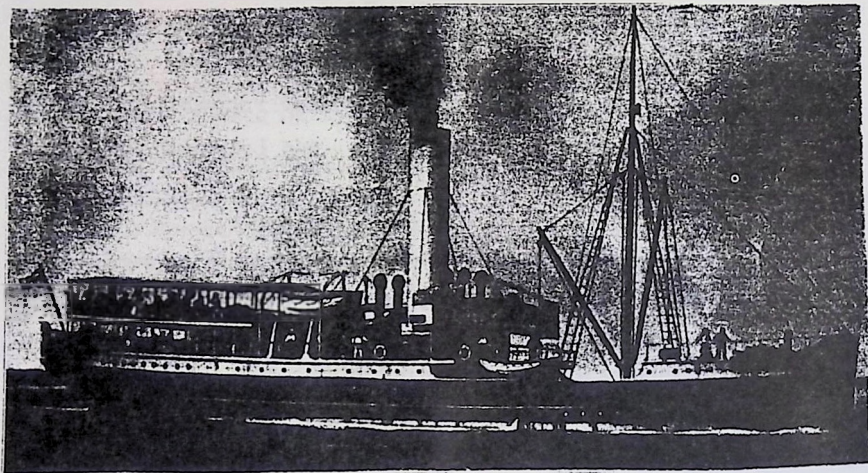
As I write this, it would appear that further work will be required to bring the air filtration system up to speed and estimates to complete the works are currently being sought.

The main purpose of this brief message is to advise members that this is a club asset that members may use as and when they see fit. Therefore I now advise that it is situated at the home of Ted Cornish at No. 8 Shelbury Place Frankston. Those wishing to use it should contact Ted on 0359 713187 (H) or 018 318180 (W) to make a time to call and fill their tanks.

It must be stressed here that Ted's place is not a dive shop, and proposed times must be agreed upon. A 90 cf tank takes approximately 25minutes to fill and due to the noise factor fills should be completed by 6 pm on any given day. Cost is \$5.00 per tank fill payable on the day.

THE COOGEE - 1887-1928

BY JOHN ASHLEY



The wreck of the "Coogee" is a regular dive on the VSAG dive calendar, probably because it's easily dived being in only 110 feet of water and within easy reach of the Sorrento launching ramp. However, when we dive the old girl do we ever wonder what sort of ship she was and what was her history.

How many divers are aware that she was once used by the Australian Navy as a mine sweeper, and was one of the few steamers built in the 1880's that saw service for more than 40 years, a feat within itself.

Originally she was called the Lancaster Witch and was built in England for the English coastal trade between Liverpool and the Isle of Man. She was sold to Huddart Parker Ltd. of Melbourne when her English owners went broke in 1888 and was used as a bay steamer between Melbourne and Geelong.

The "Coogee" became her new name and she was 225 feet long, 30 feet wide and

was 762 tons gross. Made of iron and producing 250 hp, she was indeed a smart little steamer. During 1890 she was transferred to the Bass Strait trade and completed 961 trips between Launceston and Melbourne, but in 1903 was involved in her first collision. She was only a few miles off Point Lonsdale and in a thick fog when she collided with the Fortuna Figara, an iron sailing ship.

The Captain and the man at the wheel of the Coogee were killed when the jib boom of the Figara swept away everything above the main deck of the Coogee, and fortunately everybody else was below decks at the time as it was early in the morning, or the loss of life would have been much greater.

The Coogee was involved in other collisions over the next few years; in 1914 she ran aground and remained there for a couple of days before being towed free. In the same month she also collided with the ship "Bombala" and was badly damaged. She was reconditioned in March of 1914 but shortly after collided with the SS Uganda, however this time with no major damage.

Towards the end of World War 1 she was used by the Australian Navy as a mine sweeper and in later years the Telegraph Department used her to repay the Bass Strait cable.

In 1928 the Coogee was towed out through Port Phillip heads on her final voyage and scuttled for the pleasure of VSAG divers, so as they say in the circus "come one and come all" next time the Coogee appears on our dive calendar, do it, it's an unforgettable dive.

Over the last 15 years or so I have dived the "Coogee" on many occasions, and like most other wrecks in the graveyard she is slowly deteriorating and believe it or not there is still the odd crayfish to be found.



KING ISLAND - TASSIE 23RD TO 26TH JANUARY 1998

BY PETER VLEUGEL

Six trusty divers from VSAG arrived at Moorabbin Airport on the Friday morning at 7am ready for our expedition to King Island. We arrived on the island at about 8.30am and loaded our gear into the 4WD run by Neil Batey of King Island Dive Services. He is a quiet chap who runs a first class dive charter business and operates out of the port of Grassy.

Checking into our motel in the capital of King Island, Currie, we all sorted out our gear and were then taken to Grassy in the 4WD to meet the boat. The boat is an 8m tri-hull fibreglass boat with two 200hp Yamies on the back. Well, first impressions were good, but when we had had a day on board, our next impression was excellent - you should experience the awesome power that this craft produces through the water, and the ride from the tri-hull is unbelievable. When Neil opened this thing up, everyone said "Shit, doesn't this thing go!"

We had our first dive close to Grassy Harbour in reasonably shallow water. Bob Scott and I dived together, Gerry and Robert B. were buddies and Andy and Darren dived together. The territory is excellent cray country but the bloody weed was unbelievable. When you achieve your orientation and learn to pick the rocks, well we could then examine the wild life.

A second dive after lunch, slightly further out, and the same weedy country but lots of marine life. A successful day was had by all. Dinner at the golf club was good and then rolled back to the motel by 10pm.

The following day, Neil towed the boat to Currie, hoping to get out on the Western side of the island, but it was soon apparent that the South Westerly had built too much, so we headed to Grassy once again. After launching the boat, it was decided to head North from Grassy and we motored up the coast about 15

nautical miles, dropped into a dive site that was god's country. Lots of caves, bommies, weed and kelp but a huge amount of crayfish and green abs. About the size of a dinner plate. This weekend was my first real experience of admiring a very large cray, it weighed in at 4.2 kg., and it's hard to describe the experience but all I can say is it's a big buzz and adrenalin rush, WHAT A HOOT!

Bob and I worked as a team with the retrieval and acquisition of the cray. When you need to take your gear off to climb into a cave, then push all your gear in after you and retrieve it (and a cray) well, it's a two-man job - and shit you chew some air when you work like this. That afternoon, another dive was had by all and even Darren saw a cray he was pretty happy with. That evening, we all had a meal at the local chow restaurant and a terrific evening.

The third day was almost a blow out as the wind had picked up to about 30 knots and so we could not head far from port. We all dived in shallow water and had a great dive. The second dive saw some mutiny and only Darren, Andy and Robert went out. The following day, the flight out was at 5pm and after a tour of the town museum and other points of interest, Robert and Gerry played 9 holes of golf, and we all had lunch at the pub. Then we visited the cheese factory and purchased cheeses, sorted out our booty, went to the airport, and arrived back at Moorabbin by 6.30pm. It was a top weekend. Thanks to Bob Scott for putting it together and thanks to Andy, Gerry, Robert and Darren for making it an enjoyable one. It was another successful VSAG adventure. (You should try it.)

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

Mornington Pier 21 February 1998

BY JOSIE MARE

He stood at the water's edge, his body glistening in the warmth of the summer sun and looked longingly at the bikini clad beauty lying on the golden sand only metres from him. He felt his heart flutter and decided that their friendship wasn't enough for him. He wanted her; completely, urgently. He decided he must act now. He would invite her to spend the weekend with him at his beach house.

Lying next to her on the sand, he asked about her plans for the weekend, hoping that she would not have any firm commitments. His hopes were dashed when she said "I've arranged a night dive tonight at the Mornington Pier. The dive club members are having a BBQ after the dive to swap stories and warm up." That wasn't exactly what he wanted to hear but his mind was working quickly. His beach house was at Dromana so he generously offered her the use of it after the dive. This, he told her, would minimise her travelling time after what he, as a non-diver, imagined would be strenuous exercise. She immediately understood his offer and accepted it. She too wanted more than friendship.

Having come to a tacit understanding of each others intentions, the rest of the day was spent in eager anticipation of what was to come. They arrived at the Mornington Pier and met the other divers, calmly wiled away the time prior to the dive and then, as night fell, he helped her into her dive gear and watched her disappear into the murky black depths under the pier.

The time without her passed slowly. He was keen to take her home, shower with her, lay next to her in bed, feel the warmth of her body next to his. These thoughts, and more, filled his mind as he waited, patiently, for her return.

He barely heard her stories about the dive which she shared with him and her dive buddies as they chatted around the BBQ. There was a wonderful feeling of camaraderie amongst the divers and those club members who had come along for the BBQ but he barely noticed. He was amazed at how relaxed and confident she was. He loved her for it.

He continued watching her. She was discussing sea horses, velvet fish, enormous rays and a myriad of other "dive" tales with her buddies as they all gathered food, drinks, nibbles and assorted paraphernalia for dinner. Everyone was exuberant except those who were planning a Sunday dive only to be told that it had been called off. They were obviously disappointed, all stating that they would have dived that night had they known earlier. That sorrow was, however, soon drowned.

The BBQ was Bacchanalian, the friendships real, the dive stories probably slightly exaggerated and the atmosphere could only be described as alive. However, as much as he was enjoying the evening, his apres dive plan was becoming urgent. They left the pier and drove to his beach house. It was a pleasant evening which was about to become even more so

Ed Note -

Hmmmm!

Thanks Josie for finding the time to submit your first article for FATHOMS even before being passed as a member. You deserve what you must have got on the night.



VSAG NIGHT DIVE

BY DES WILLIAMS

OK, the visibility was very poor indeed, but I always enjoy a dive, especially with the great crew at V.S.A.G. There was a reasonable response to Leo Maybus' night dive, as the forecast high winds looked like blowing away the dive scheduled for the following day, Sunday 22nd.

There were at least 7-8 divers and some family assembled by 8PM, when we began the kit up after choosing buddies. Josie Mare and I teamed up, and I must say it is great to have another excellent diver joining us at V.S.A.G. We did enjoy our dive, despite the very poor, gloomy visibility and we were able to stay together the whole dive.

We swam out beneath weird gloomy dark outlines of the moored fishing boats along the inside of the pier and soon found ourselves under the newly built ENTERPRIZE sailing ship, which had just berthed at the pier. The roar of its idling engine became louder as we approached and I was thankful when I was finally able to spot its propeller, which was not turning. A bit tricky having boats, fishermen and divers all using the same spot in the dark of night.

Our journey along under the pier was uneventful, except for a lot of junk littering the bottom and dozens of large grotesque starfish feeding on mussels. For those with a keen eye, there were plenty of seahorses (White's Seahorse) to amuse us. They are rather drab in colour and nowhere near as pretty as the weedy-seadragon we see around the coast. I estimated the seahorses to be as large as 200mm long. On the way back to the shore, Josie spied a very large specimen curled around a mooring line, it reminded her of a ring-tailed possum!

On a very good night, when the visibility is good, this is certainly a great place to photograph a wide variety of marine life. On our dive, we chased a good sized flathead, saw many seahorses, starfish, gurnard, old wife, yellowtail, S.A cobblerfish and enough invertebrate life to make some good photographs. Leo

knows his marine life and later told me he had seen a Velvetfish, which is very difficult to spot in weedy areas. Leo's playmate, a small octopus, had wandered off over the velvetfish, which brought it to his attention.

Eventually, we reached the end of the pier, marked by a series of close fitting pylons, through which my torch caught the glint of a passing school of yellowtail. Time to turn around where we met up with Darren Pearce and leisurely cruise back over the same territory to the tiny harbour, where we were assisted out by non-diving Robert Birtles.

Leo and Peter Vleugel soon had the B-B-Q operating, as it was 9.45PM by that time and many divers were ready for a feed. I departed at this stage, to be home at around 10.30PM. Thank you Leo for organising the dive and thanks to Josie for the company.

I include a few notes on "Whites Seahorse", *Hippocampus whitei*, for those interested. The body of this species is compressed and is deeper than wide. Spines above the eyes converge to form a small prominence in front. There is a small spine above the hind border of the eyes. The body ridges are raised, forming blunt knobs at the intersections with the body rings. The snout is rather long, being equal to half the length of the head. Colour grey and brown, with small white spots. Belly golden with large dark spots. Length 21cms.

Distribution: S. Aust, Victoria, N.S.W, Qld and Tasmania.



VSAG CATCH 'N COOK 1998

BY CHRIS LLEWELLYN

The VSAG Catch "N Cook days seem to be becoming bigger epics than Ben Hur, with another big roll up this year and a catch so big we had to give half of it away!

As St Valentines fell on the preceding day, bookings were a little slower this year as VSAG members were obviously regaining lost energies from the day's activities. But by the time bookings closed off we had four boats and twenty confirmed hunters ready to risk life and lungs to bring back a suitable catch.

The phone rang at 7am on the dot the next morning with a very distressed Annie Jeacle demanding I go and get the carrot, who had propped for the night, out of the cot. I quickly summed up my predicament, should I tackle a seven foot red haired giant or query an angry Scotswoman on the other end of the phone. I decided on the latter. "Is it that serious, Annie?" I asked. "Yes, it's that bloody serious," came the reply. I quickly scuttled off and roused the Lloyd. Turns out that Annie had been up all night warding off gatecrashers to young Jessica's party and Mick was summoned home to take over family commitments, namely a drive to Nagambie.

Anyway, being a resourceful lot (and ones that can forget friends misfortunes very quickly) we soon had Rosco at the door to tow the brick down to Rye ramp and meet up with our fellow divers. With Peter's Allison, Andy's new Yamaha and Neville's trusty Haines, we soon had all divers hurtling towards a secret location scallop bed off McCrae. It was so secret that when we found it, Robert Birtles who was the secret location finder, decided to surface and go to another spot to find scallops. Finn and I bravely pushed on and after a few minutes of getting the eye in we soon began to find the beasts, slowly at first but then more and more. Not big ones I might add but certainly the sign are very encouraging for a big catch of large scallops a few years down the track.

As we surfaced Robbie Birtles and crew were just arriving back at the secret location and only after we produced the said catch did they once again enter the



Look out Blake! Pat's trying to steal all the scallops!



The hunters return with the catch.



Ted Cornish shows off his cooking skills to the Finnegan's.



Stomachs filled, VSAG'ers enjoy a quiet ale or three after a hard day's work.

water in chase of the elusive shellfish. We then headed over to one of the channel markers to retrieve a handy quantity of mussels off the pylons.

We were soon back at 8 Elwers Road making preparations for the feast. And as the catch bags kept on coming and contents spilled onto the lawn, it soon became obvious that we had more than enough for the group of about 60 to 70 adults and kids that had now gathered. I have no doubt there must have been at least 2000 scallops, not to mention the mussels. In fact we soon gave up all thoughts of trying to clean the lot and just selected the larger ones for the plate that day. But don't worry, they certainly didn't go to waste as all those who were still keen enough to take a load home and start cleaning yet again had "Shellfish Mountain" reduced in no time. Even the neighbours got in on the act.

Robbie Birtles was kind enough to donate two kilos of huge king prawns, which when combined with a sizzling hot plate of garlic scallops and steamed mussels made one know one of the reasons why we went diving.

Special thanks must go to Ted and Jan Cornish for bringing a trailer and disposing of all the rubbish by way of "Big Shot Bins." Also thanks to all those who brought along salads and deserts and pitched in with the heavy workload and helped make another very memorable and enjoyable Catch 'n Cook day.

DECO STOPS

BY ALEX TALAY



Dale Huby has a new nickname it's "ONO" because every time he dives he loses something and is seen at the back of the boat bellowing "OH NO!!" which immediately alerts all on board to the fact that some vital piece of equipment has bit the dust.

As Dale is new to diving I have been lending him my equipment, usually the type that is difficult to lose ie. Reg., vest etc.

On a recent dive to the Nobbies I noticed his hat sail over the stem. Realising his growing reputation he said nothing, so I kept it to myself as well.

Hoping this would be the only lost item on the dive I sent him on his way festooned with lots of string, clamps and whatever else it took to ensure that he and his gear didn't part company.

Content that all was well, I sat back in the boat to await his excited babble about some new mystery of the deep that had revealed itself to him.

Upon surfacing I noticed a stricken look appear on his dial. This was closely followed by the usual roar of "Oh No!" Stupidly I had forgotten to nail my brand new weight belt to his body and this has now joined various other items scattered about Davy Jones' locker from Robe to Phillip Island.

PS. Mick gave Dale a list of questions for his diver profile at the February meeting. You guessed it, he lost them. Upon hearing this Mick faxed Dale 3 copies in the hope that at least one would survive. With a bit of luck it should appear elsewhere in this edition.

PPS. Mick has assured me he has cured Dale of his unfortunate habit as on a recent dive to the 90 foot sub he ordered Dale from the water and stood him in the middle of the boat, well away from the gunnels and stripped him bit by bit.

Seal-cam details dive

By GRAEME O'NEILL

IN a breathtaking feat of endurance, a female Weddell seal has been recorded making an 80-minute dive in pitch-black, frigid water beneath Antarctic sea ice while hunting for fish.

During such dives, Weddell seals were also found to range out to 5km from an isolated breathing hole in the ice. They unerringly found their way back, apparently using visual cues on the rough underside of the ice.

Marine biologists at the United States' McMurdo base also obtained visual records of the epic dives on a tiny, \$75,000 hi-tech video camera mounted on the seals' heads.

The January 30 edition of *Science* magazine describes how Dr Terrie Williams, of

cloud the water, making the fish hard to see, but researchers suspect the air bubble provides a clear cavity helping to back-light the fish so they become visible.

To ensure recovery of the head-cams, which see in near darkness with infra-red (heat) imaging technology, researchers drilled a hole into an area of unbroken sea ice, chosen so there was no other breathing hole within a radius of at least 5km.

They then captured several Weddell seals and fitted them with the head-cam, and released them into the drilled hole — the seals stayed underwater for up to 80 minutes, and ranged out to a distance of at least 5km during diving.

Dr Davis likens it to a lion holding its breath for many minutes while pursuing its prey.



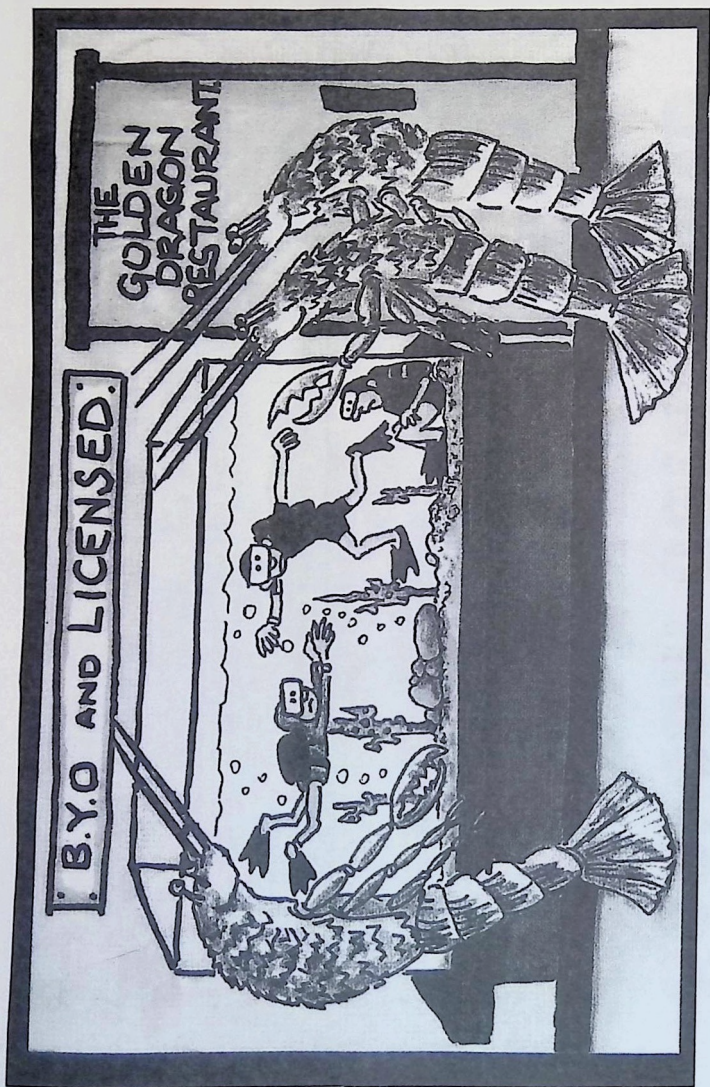
Ice: Weddell seals use ice to find their way back.

the University of California, Santa Cruz, and Dr Randy Davis, of Texas A&M University, used

new technology to illuminate the hidden lives of Weddell seals. Video head-cam footage shows the seals can alter their buoyancy, and sink like a stone into the black depths without moving a flipper, to conserve energy

and oxygen while hunting. The seals eat up to 200 fish a day, but it is not known how they locate prey in the darkness. But researchers obtained images of seals blowing bubbles that rose to the underside of the sea ice and flushed out fish that apparently were trying to hide.

Algal blooms normally



Herald-Sun 8.3.98

Marine park plan labelled a farce

PORT Phillip Bay's planned new marine park is a farce, say environmental groups and fishermen.

Details of the proposed 17,453ha park to spread across the Heads, were contained in the Environment Conservation Council's interim report *Marine, Coastal and Estuarine Investigation*, which was tabled in parliament yesterday.

The report said the marine park would include two sanctuary zones and five special nature sites which excluded commercial and recreational fishing.

But fishing without netting, long-lining and trapping would be permitted in the remaining 80 per cent of the park.

Green groups had hoped at least 50 per cent of the park would receive high-level protection.

By SARAH DENT,
environment reporter

Two new areas would be set aside for aquaculture, controls have been recommended for high-speed boating and power-skiing, but no further restrictions were placed on catch limits.

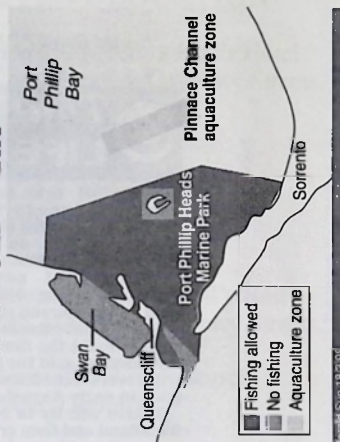
Recreational fishing's peak body VRFish called for the removal of the Environment Conservation Council. It said the report threatened the \$765 million-a-year recreational fishing industry.

"We're encouraging all recreational fishermen to contact the government and let them know this is not acceptable," he said.

The Victorian National Parks Association has challenged the government to deliver real protection for the "jewel of the bay".

VNPA marine cam-

THE PROPOSED PARK



paigro officer Kate Brent said the so-called park allowed a confusing variety of uses that would not be accepted in a national park on land.

"National parks in the southern end of Port Phillip Bay could be as trea-

sured as the Great Barrier Reef, with a magical underworld including forests of giant kelp, seagrass meadows and colorful sponge gardens all creating important habitats for a huge variety of sealife," she said.