

FATHOMS

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Safety in Diving

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VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

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FATHOMS

Official journal of the *Victorian Sub - Aqua Group*

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Next General Meetings:

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

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Tuesday 24th February- Bob Scott's home
Tuesday 24th March - Robert Birtles's home

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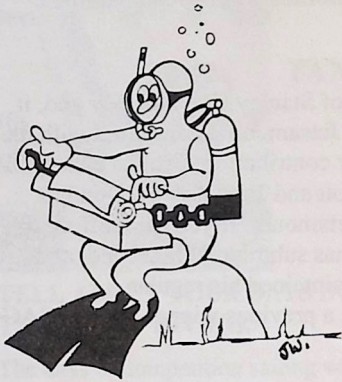
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Andy Mastrowicz, Des Williams & John Lawler

EDITORIAL



What a summer so far. I know I speak for my whole family, and indeed every other VSAG camper at Robe over Christmas, when I say what a pleasure it was to not be flooded out again. In fact Annie had reassured me before we set out that this was the last straw as far as camping at Christmas was concerned, and if we were flooded out again then the tent would either have to be sold or go to Big Shot Bins. I'm happy to say that we live to enjoy another erection and that South Australia will be our future choice at this time of the year.

Last week I enjoyed a fabulous day diving our very own back beaches. I can recall a similar day at least twelve years ago and I had forgotten just how magnificent this whole area is, due entirely to the fact that we rarely dive it because of the large swells predominant on most scheduled dive days. I guess Robert Swoffer jealously guards this region as his very own as he has the advantage of taking a short drive to check out the conditions before deciding to dive. If you read this Robert, I would certainly appreciate the odd future phone call whereby I would be happy to join you when conditions present as they did on Sunday 18 January, 1998.

Leo Maybus is once again attempting the across the bay underwater challenge from Sorrento to Queenscliff. This time his partner will be Murray Black and the scheduled date is Saturday, 28 March, 1998. Whilst the take off time is listed at 8.30 am on that day, Leo is currently seeking some expert advice on tidal currents and this may vary marginally. We will keep you informed, as the boys would definitely like some encouragement and support from fellow members on the day.

At the January Committee meeting, two new members were passed; Dale Huby

At the January Committee meeting, two new members were passed; Dale Huby and Allan Sack. Congratulations to these two fellows and I hope we see you on many future dives with the club. New member profiles will be featured in the next issue of FATHOMS.

In this issue we have a new author by the name of Stanley Crayfish. My god, it took me years to find out who wrote Flotsam & Jetsam, now I am faced with the same problem! Anyway, thanks Stanley for your contribution. Thanks also to other scribes Don Abell, Peter Vleugel, June Scott and John Ashley. Don has written a great article on the historic ships in Portsmouth. If you can't afford to go, well now there is no need to. Peter Vleugel has submitted his second, and certainly not last article, and John Ashley has maintained his regular contribution. Great also to hear from June Scott, a previous winner of the VSAG literary award.

Keep your eyes on the dive/social calendar for some great summer diving ahead. Sure beats the pants off winter!

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 19 March

Thursday 16 April

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



VSAG PROFILE

Gerald DeVries AGE: 37

OCCUPATION: Builder

FAMILY: Wife Andrea, Sons Cameron (6)
& Ashley (5) Fosters the cat (13) &
Lady the dog (2).

TELL ABOUT YOUR DAYS IN COMPETITION SAILING & WHY YOU TURNED TO DIVING.

The days of competition sailing were undoubtedly the best of my life - but really the time of life from about 17 years until about the age of 30 are party days for most people. I travelled to heaps of sailing destinations and went away every long weekend. My dad was keen to get me into sailing as my best friend at the time did a lot of motorbike riding which resulted in the death of my friend at the age of 17.

I sailed every Saturday at Elwood Sailing Club and was a competition sailor which in the end was the reason I got out of the sport. There was always too much pressure to keep ahead of your rivals and I did very well in the heavy weather sailing but preferred to play on the days when there was only a light breeze.

I was Australian Junior Champion at age 18 and thoroughly enjoyed the sport, but the fact my dad used to sit on the shore with a pair of binoculars watching the race then ball me out when I got to shore for tacking the wrong way or capsizing in the wrong spot really pissed me off.

However, I met my princess !!!!! through sailing as at the time Andrea was heavily into sailing windsurfers and had herself sailed since the age of 10 in her own boat which was affectionately called by her mum "Cuddle Me". This I did later down the track and a fact that my in-laws now wish that they had have taken their daughters hang-gliding or rock climbing or something where less bums hang out.

Anyway, it was time to move to a sport which was dry and non-competitive thus I ended up diving.

HOW DID YOU COME TO GET INVOLVED WITH VSAG?

I got involved through a friend at the time who was an instructor and then Robert Birtles introduced me to all the young bucks at VSAG.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE UNDERWATER INTERESTS & DIVE SITES?

My favourite underwater interest is just to basically sit on the bottom and watch the fish go by.

TELL US ABOUT ONE OF YOUR MORE MEMORABLE DIVES.

One of my best dives would have to be off Robe two years ago with Peter Vleugel. We were surrounded by about 50 to 60 dolphins for at least 20 minutes. When it was time to surface we were followed up by them.

HAS YOUR HEALTH EVER BEEN AFFECTED BY DIVING?

My health has improved as I have stopped that most disgusting, filthy and dirty habit of smoking which I would thoroughly recommend all smokers on this planet should do.

HAS YOUR CAVE DIVING COURSE BEEN OF BENEFIT TO YOUR GENERAL DIVING?

The cave diving course was the most beneficial course I could have done. It would be well recommended for any diver to do. It covers the basics of diving and we know anyone at anytime could do with revision. But then it took us to the ultimate diving techniques and safety procedures. Ian Lewis instructed us and he is without doubt a real professional. He pulled many of us out of years of bad diving habits and taught us not to silk things up, a technique some older VSAG diehards without a doubt could use. We had many nights of theory here at our house and the more practical aspects at the Ringwood pool and then on to Cardinia Reservoir where the fun really begins with zero visibility. (We apparently all died about 10 times at Cardinia - according to Ian, but luckily it was only a practice run.)

The highlight was a weekend at Piccaninnie Ponds on a beautiful weekend. It was almost like a wet dream.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR FAVOURITE OVERSEAS DIVING DESTINATION AND WHY?

Diving on the President Coolidge would have to be the ultimate. The trip I did down to the propeller shaft was the deepest dive I have done. Seventy metres, and Andrea was very glad of all the paper work we had done pre trip to have my life insurance cover diving, considering my high blood pressure and fondness for a beer....(never).

I also enjoyed the atmosphere and friendliness of last year's trip to Vanuatu. Diving by yourself might be nice, but with 20 or so good divers and friends, well what could be better. (Plus the work in organising such a trip by Don was most greatly appreciated.)

WILL YOU ENCOURAGE YOUR KIDS TO DIVE AND JOIN THE CLUB?

Our fantastic little men, Cameron and Ashley have already worn out their first sets of mask/snorkel and fins but I'm happy to say that Father Christmas brought them both a real fair dinkum set of mask/snorkel and fins to Robe.

Ashley, who was four years old at the time, went to the try dive day at the Nunawading pool and spent over an hour snorkelling around - mind you, he must be a bit of a chip off the old block (his mother will cringe at that) as I am not sure if the water was more of an attraction or swimming around with the lovely Miss Kim Mastrowicz and Miss Lauren Maybus. (I mean who could blame him?)

AS A CLUB MEMBER IS VSAG MEETING YOUR EXPECTATIONS/REQUIREMENTS?

Yes, as a club member I still thoroughly enjoy the General Meetings, club trips to places such as Wilsons Prom., the Christmas trips etc. etc.

WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE DIVING AMBITIONS?

To stay alive and dive as much as possible and anywhere will do.



A DAY IN THE LIFE

BY STANLEY CRAYFISH

It was 1970 something or other, all I can remember about the time is that it was cold, "Bloody Cold!" I think maybe the Queen's birthday long weekend and these were the days when new wetsuits still had no hood and some less self conscious divers actually wore panty hose under their wetsuits to keep warm. Ah yes, these were the days of the Neptune Diving Club. These were the good old days when the likes of Bob Scott and John Lawler were still in their prime and so too probably half of VSAG.

But I digress from the story at hand. The Neptune Diving Club were off to Tidal River for yet another long great long weekend of diving. At our fortnightly meeting, twelve divers were going along with girlfriends and wives and , as in one case, someone else's wife, so we organised three boats - Ray's Haines Hunter, Theo's tinnie, and I had to organise another boat due to a mishap (sinking) of my beloved "Yellow Brick." (Ed. Note - Yellow Brick! Sounds familiar.)

As I could not borrow a boat, (don't know why) I decided to hire one, and this was to be one of the first disasters of the forthcoming trip. The steering was hooked up arse about, so to turn left you steered right and vice versa , and the boat could not be left unattended for any length of time because there was a SLIGHT leak somewhere.

We awoke on Saturday morning at the Prom to a beautiful sunny day with no wind, and after a hearty breakfast decided to check out the conditions. There was a small swell running but as there was no wind it was decided to do a two tank dive - one in the morning at Norman Island, followed by lunch at Refuge Cove (the small one at the Glennie Island Group) & then the second dive at Skull Rock. Four of our intrepid divers got no further than the breakers at Tidal River, as Theo managed to find the only submerged rock which promptly took off all three propeller blades. The dive these guys did at Tongue Point that day was not as good as the diving we did out on the islands, the look on their faces said it all. That night after dinner and copious amounts of beer and port, Ray asked me if I could look at his outboard engine as it had a tendency for the fuel to flood the

carbys and power head. The first thing we had to do was remove all the fuel from the combustion chamber and dry the plugs, so I took out the plugs and told Ray to hold the ignition leads well away from the spark plug holes. However, when I cranked over the engine he got a shock from one of the leads and let them go.

It was at this point in time that I realised that you could turn an outboard engine into a flame thrower; this in itself would have been funny if only there was no tent behind the motor, and to make matters worse, it wasn't ours. By the time the occupants got out of the tent to see who set it on fire, we were gone, & to this day he still thinks someone threw petrol on his tent and set it on fire just to piss him off.

Day two was overcast, and the wind was beginning to pick up causing a considerable surf to roll in. As we only had two boats left, Ray's Haines was considerably overloaded as all twelve divers had to fit into two boats - five in mine and seven in his. Ray was first out through the surf and on his way. My boat's engine would not start, so I took off the cover to check out the problem, leaving instructions with my crew that if any breakers came near the boat I was to be told straight away. Isn't it always the way that you are told too late? The first wave drowned the motor so there was no way that it was ever going to start, and the next two waves filled up the boat so that the water levels inside the boat and outside the boat were exactly the same.

This was not going to be a good day, as a matter of fact it got worse. The boat sank, the seats which had the built in buoyancy had been removed to accommodate the extra divers, and the life jackets floated away along with dive buckets and other gear. As the boat sank in only 4 to 5 feet of water it was easily beached, emptied and put back on the trailer, and all the gear was eventually recovered. Then we went back to our tents to lick our wounds and think about what could have been. We were down to one boat, and that was out at Skull Rock in worsening conditions.

During the course of the day I was trying to work out the best way of telling the hire boat people why the engine was full of sea water, but in the end I thought silence was the best policy, or maybe I could blame the previous hirer. My thoughts were interrupted however about 3.00pm by a rather large and burly Park Ranger who wanted to know who was in charge of Neptunes, and suddenly it seemed like there was only two people left in the world. Him and me. I told him

that I was and was promptly told that Ray's boat was out of fuel somewhere between Skull Rock and the mainland and that I should go and take them some fuel, to which I replied that I could not, because I had sunk my boat that morning. Well, the colour of his face and the look in his eyes needed no words as he turned away and headed to the shed where they kept their own boat.

By about 6.00pm Ray was back and we thought that to stay another day would be foolish, so we packed up and headed for home.

Since that weekend I have visited the Prom many times and had many enjoyable dives. I guess it was just a day in the life of a Scuba Diver.

Ed Note. - A great story Stanley, I for one am glad I wasn't with your group that weekend. Now we will all be busy trying to learn your identity. And no folks, it's not me despite the "yellow brick."

ROBE AIR FILLS

The following people owe VSAG for air fills whilst holidaying at Robe during the Christmas trip of 1997/1998.

NAME	AIR FILLS	AMOUNT OWING
Alex Talay	2	\$10.00
Dale Huby	2	\$10.00
Barry Truscott	1	\$5.00
Sant Khan	3	\$15.00
Martin Taliana	1	\$5.00
Andy Mastrowicz	8	\$40.00
Priya Cardinaletti/John Mills	3	\$15.00
Jack Namiota	1	\$5.00

Would those concerned please pay treasurer Bob Scott at earliest convenience. The Club would expect to receive payment by the February General Meeting.

PORTSMOUTH HISTORIC SHIPS

BY DON ABELL

A couple of years ago I was in the UK and took a trip with Nicky to Portsmouth which is only a short drive from where we were staying in Bournemouth. The real attraction was the Mary Rose exhibition and I had no idea of how fascinating a visit it would be.

I probably should have expected a good display. England was one of the great seafaring nations and has spent centuries challenging the French, Spanish and Portuguese for domination of the seven seas. They even encountered poor old Argentina in the Falklands battle so that the Brits would be reminded of the halcyon days. It obviously worked and ensured Thatcher was re-elected.

Portsmouth is a tour I would recommend to anyone visiting the UK but you should allow most of the day as there is plenty to see. As well as the Mary Rose visitors have full access to the HMS Victory and HMS Warrior. Each is worth a visit in its own right. When you finish the ships there is the Royal Naval Museum.

HMS WARRIOR

This little piece of naval armoury was built to ensure that the French fully understood that they had no real ability to challenge the Pommies on water. The battleship was launched in 1860 having cost 377,292 pounds to build.

At the time of commissioning this was the most formidable battleship the world had ever seen. It was the first iron hulled, iron clad warship. Considered an iron citadel, the thickness of the sides was four and a half inches of wrought iron backed by eighteen inches of teak and 5/8 inch of wrought iron and an inner cladding of one and a half inches of pine.

The guns and boilers were housed in an impregnable armoured box. It could outgun and outrun any other ship afloat - a fact not lost on Napoleon III.

The ship could be powered by steam or sail. Under the power of both it could reach 17.5 knots which was fairly impressive in the nineteenth century. When under sail alone the propeller could be raised and housed to reduce drag.

Specifications:

Length:	418 feet
Beam:	58 feet
Displacement:	9,210 tons
Draft:	26 feet
Topsail area:	37,546 square feet
Total crew	705

As a penalty for being at the cutting edge of naval design, the Warrior had a short active life of only 22 years. However in her time she was never challenged in battle. The full restoration cost seven million pounds.

HMS VICTORY

Launched in 1765, Victory cost 63,176 pounds to build. It is the oldest commissioned ship in the world. The ship is still being restored in a program aimed for completion in the year 2005. Guided tours will take you to all parts of this famous museum.

The opulence of Admiral Nelson's accommodation was a stark contrast to the less luxurious crew quarters. This seemed to me to be a small ship for a crew of over 800.

The crew could fire the ship's guns at up to one shot per minute which was four times the rate of the French or Spanish gun crews. That may explain the success at Trafalgar when the French and Spanish greatly outnumbered the British ships. Victory attacked and broke through the enemy lines. Nelson fell in the battle and I thought I could still see his blood on the deck.

Mind you he had not had much luck before. He lost sight in his right eye in 1794 and lost his right arm in 1797 (both in battle). You might notice most paintings of Nelson are from the left side.

It was tradition to bury the dead at sea. In fact the Commanders' bunks were pine boxes which would be used as coffins if they died. They literally nailed a lid on the cot and dropped you overboard.

In Nelson's death it was different. He requested to be taken home and buried in British soil. So to preserve his body he was immersed in a barrel of brandy until the ship docked. I don't know whether the crew were still issued with their brandy rations.

MARY ROSE

A visit to the preserved remains of the Mary Rose is just awesome. As well as the ship there is a museum of artefacts recovered from the wreck site. It might be about time Des Williams brought out his slides of the Mary Rose for a club meeting.

She was built for Henry V111 in 1509 as a purpose built warship. Principally of oak materials, it is estimated that up to 35 acres of forest would have been felled to build her.

On 19 July 1545 she left port to engage the French. Although designed to carry 200 sailors, 185 soldiers and 30 gunners, it was reported that she carried 700 on that day. The troops were covered by a rope netting to protect them from boarding parties. When water entered the gun ports and the ship heeled over, the nets prevented escape and fewer than 40 survived.

The ship lay preserved in the river silt until the hull was pinpointed in 1971. A team that included 600 volunteer divers and onshore helpers raised the remains of the hull in 1982 after 437 years. In addition more than 20,000 artefacts were recovered from the sea bed.

The preservation/conservation process is incredible. It is all clearly visible to the visiting public and the design is able to be identified from the viewing platform. The remains are in a room at less than five degrees celsius and ninety five degrees humidity. The timbers are sprayed with chilled fresh water for 20 hours every day.

The spraying could continue for another 25 years. When the program is complete, active conservation will replace water in the wood with an inert chemical. Then the drying out process will begin.

Artefacts in the museum include clothes, weapons and personal possessions. As you might imagine, the Archaeologists are having a great time recreating shipboard life of the 16th century.

So, if you're in the area this exhibition is a must.

For those into trivia:

All serving naval personnel used to be issued with half a pint of rum on a daily basis. This became official in 1731 and was not abolished until 1970.



THE MARVELLOUS BACK BEACHES

BY MICK JEACLE

Due to a Southerly change forecast for the evening of Saturday 17th January, it was decided at the January General Meeting to switch the Shellback Island dive from Sunday to Saturday, and to also change the venue to Sorrento. We had had a hot spell during the week, and the forecast for the Saturday was a very hot 42 degrees. Even at that stage I began thinking about the back beaches as I had not dived that area in idyllic conditions for many years.

Despite the forecast, we only managed to raise the interest of eleven divers, who were accommodated in the boats of Jeacle, Vleugel and Lawler. However, we did run into Robert Swoffer at the ramp and Andy Mastrowicz at sea doing the family thing. Those present on the day were soon to experience a most memorable day as we headed out from Sorrento and around Point Nepean on calm seas. As there was no surf visible on the corner of Point Nepean, I was confident that we would be able to dive in close to shore where some wonderful ledges, caves and swimthroughs abound.

After some twenty minutes travel we decided upon a likely spot about 400 metres past Sorrento back beach. The water here was markedly clearer than the bay and heads area which seemed to be suffering the effects of the stormy rain squalls earlier in the week. The reefs were easily distinguishable in 25 feet of water and there was no swell to speak of in our chosen area. In fact I noticed that in many places along the coast one could have easily positioned the boat in the shallows and stepped ashore, such were the conditions on the day.

On my boat I had the pleasure of the company of Robert Birtles Esq., junior sub-editor Darren Pearce, and newcomer Josie Mare who was diving with VSAG for the second time. Whilst we all entered the water together, both Robert and myself agreed to keep an eye on Josie for the mandatory checkout dive which is a prelude to becoming a VSAG member. Whilst the terrain here was quite good, ledges were very rocky and not ideal but we did see a large carpet shark and several Port Jackson sharks which occupied a large ledge just past the anchor.

After about an hour we surfaced and climbed aboard the boat. Young Darren was still in the water and upon surfacing he had us in fits of laughter as he informed us of the two ten pounders that escaped his grasp, most likely due to an adrenalin rush and some hastiness on his part. At first I was a bit sceptical but his continued enthusiasm and ravings convinced me it must be true. Better luck next time Darren.

After lunch we moved to a new spot some 300 metres further East and anchored the boat very close to shore in a sheltered cove. The water here looked even clearer than the first spot and the depth sounder revealed a very interesting bottom. Robert and Josie were first in and Darren and myself decided to do our own thing. Upon entering the water I immediately noticed a vastly different terrain which was far superior to the previous spot. There were myriad ledges and swimthroughs and the kelp soared towards the surface with barely a shimmer as the sun's rays shone through the water to light up the bottom. In particular there were many large cave like holes with fine sandy bottoms which were usually accessible and with light shining through from the top. Quite often these holes had other ledges and caverns and crayfish were abundant.

My dive here lasted 75 minutes, and if I had another tank I would have gone in again.

I certainly was not in a hurry to climb aboard the boat, preferring to defy the scorching heat by floating upright in the water in wetsuit and fins. Peter Vleugel went one better and swam from his boat to mine in bathers and Pat Reynolds went one better again as he swam around Peter's boat in the altogether. The atmosphere was one of eleven extremely relaxed divers who seemed in no hurry to return to the ramp.

However all good things come to an end and following a fast trip back to the Heads we headed for Portsea where we anchored for a refreshing swim with all the beautiful people for around 40 minutes. A fitting end to a marvellous day shared in good company.



ROBE SOUTH AUSTRALIA CHRISTMAS 1997

BY PETER VLEUGEL

After diving for a few days around the coast close to Robe, I suggested to the TROOPS that we should look further afield for cleaner water. So I put forward a proposal to venture to the Cape Jaffa Lighthouse Rock (Margaret Brock Reef.)

The trip is about 18 nautical miles north of Robe. The day arrived and the boats were launched. Four boats were : The Allison, Andy's Yamaha, Mick's Coaster and Andy's brother-in-law Jim in his boat. The day started quite calm but the seas gradually built up, the further up the coast we travelled.

Upon arriving at a particular reef, which is approximately three nautical miles off the coast directly in front of the town of Cape Jaffa, which is the home of a fleet of about 40 cray boats, my crew of Bazza, Gerry and Jack decided that we should dive in reasonably deep water. Searching the area littered with cray pots, the mark and shot line were dropped. Gerry and I kitted up and dropped into 17 metres of water gin clear, spectacular reef, lots of crays and of course, a pod of 6 dolphins. After staying together for ten minutes, we headed into different directions. After pulling a cray, I realised that I had left my catch bag on board, so the cray and I swam around hand-in-hand but the dolphins thought that they might get a feed - but not likely.

Bazz and Jack had a dive and the old Bazz.....can he pull them. He extracted some of the largest crays I had seen for quite a while.

The wind kept building up and by the time we all had our first dive, it was blowing about 30-35 knots. We had seven crays on board and thought it might be smart to think about heading back. The four boats started to punch into the 2m sea and after about half an hour, I noticed Mick's boat stop - to change their fuel tank over - and it was their last 20 litres! We all still had about 12 NM to travel back to Robe and after thinking about the situation, I called Mick and suggested that he turn back to Jaffa and we would come back to pick them up with the trailer.

It took us about another hour to punch back - it was a very wet and uncomfortable ride home but it wasn't beyond the capabilities of the boat as it handles these conditions extremely well.

Andy and crew followed as they travelled a little slower due to Jim's smaller craft. After cleaning the boat and sorting out how we had to go about retrieving Mick's boat, it was decided to take two cars - Mick's and my 4WD - just in case it was required to retrieve the boat off the beach. Upon arrival at Jaffa General Store and licensed grocery, the boys were quite comfortable sitting at the table out the front. The table was buried in stubbies as they had arranged a credit agreement with the proprietor for the beer. It seems that you don't expect to spend much money when you go diving, but sometimes you can get caught. After a few roadies, the boat was retrieved from the beach. Mick's Commodore BOGGED, boat trailer BOGGED - the Jeep saved both of them.

Then a 40 km drive back to Robe and a terrific and exciting day was had by all. Thanks to all of the boys for a great day - and Andy, I think your choice of boat is excellent; bit of a difference to the Haines, hey?

Ed note - Thanks again Peter, Gerry and Co for coming back to Cape Jaffa to rescue four lost souls. I must say it sure is amazing how quick and painless the time goes by in such a predicament when there is plenty of beer available.

MY TRIP TO ROBE

BY JUNE SCOTT

Our sortie to Robe was as good as you could expect. We, that is Bob and myself, packed Christmas eve , to head off to Bacchus Marsh for Christmas dinner with my sister and her family and we were heading off to Sth. Aussie Boxing morning from there. We were on the road around 8 am. and stopped for fuel and coffee break at Hamilton where we met up with the Cornish clan and arrived Robe mid-afternoon. And the trailer towed real well Leo, no hassles at all.

Hell, setting up camp was back breaking; unloaded groceries, bedding, clothing and made the beds. I said beds because Bob snores (a little), put the kettle on and home for the next two weeks was ready.

The Boys had a few good dives although the conditions were not as good as our previous trip. The wind was always there and was warm when you were out of the wind. But the wind was fresh, which made for good sleeping and keeping the flies away.

We went four wheel driving for the fist time and got bogged right down to both diffs. We had to be dug out with a lot of help from Ross Luxford, who had all the right gear, even a brush to dust down the sand before you got back into you car. A lot of lessons were learnt that day, but it was a lot of fun (wasn't it Peter)and we really enjoyed the experiance and would love to do it again sometime.

We went to Mount Gambier for a look at the Pinnacles and a dip in Ewen's Ponds. Chris Vleugel and I stood back and watched the guys kit up. It was a sorry sight. At one stage there were four bums lined up side by side. There was Peter's straight bum ,Pat's with a sway back , Gerry's round bum and Bobs cute bum. I named them the Pinnacle Bums (My husband is a little forgetful these days. When we got to the Mount and he was gearing up, he realised that he had forgotten his booties and had to wear his joggers. Oh well, I suppose he can put it down to experiance.)

I must thank Andy and Gale for a well organised trip and a terrific New Year's Eve party under the marquee that Andy had erected with fairy lights and all. We had a mad hat competition and Gale organized certificates for various sections and deeds done over the trip. It was the high light of the night after the food. Each family brought a plate of something to put on the table and we all shared in the feast. It shows how much camping experience that V.S.A.G. has by the quality and quantity of food that was supplied. It was great.

SCUBA MARKET

FOR SALE

Ladies Aqua Pro 7 mm wetsuit size 8 - 10.

Navy blue with pink stripe.

Front zip and attached hood. Good condition.

Also: Weightbelt with weights, mask, fins, booties and knife.

PRICE - \$150.00 the lot. Will separate.

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DECO STOPS

BY MICK JEACLE

The DeVries kids got some great Christmas presents. Everybody's favourite, especially the big boys' were a pair of missiles that looked like small bombs. These whistled like the real thing when thrown with great gusto and many an aching shoulder was evident after the many sessions enjoyed by all. Yours truly was enjoying this "exercise" one particularly warm day when I heard Ted yell "I'll go ya halves, Mick!" No sooner had he muttered the words than the icy contents of his car fridge splashed on my back. It appears Annie Jeacle had offered to pay him \$5. if he carried out the dastardly deed. It seems the power of the dollar outweighed sanity in this instance. More on this later.

.....

Barry and Maree Truscott seemed to be really relaxed on this trip, especially Maree who enjoyed take aways on many occasions. One day they had just finished lunch which consisted of fish and potato cakes. Samantha Jeacle could smell the potato cakes as the aroma drifted across the way to our tent and remarked that she would love a potato cake right now. "No problem," said Ted Cornish who had observed Maree disposing of the leftovers in the rubbish bin. In true Big Shot style, Ted retrieved the booty and he and Samantha made short work of it. You should see Ted's shed at home - choc-a-block with "goodies" retrieved from customer bins.

.....

Those who arrived early and prior to Christmas day, were treated to a slide show by Martin and Josie Taliana. I must admit this is the first time I had experienced this type of leisure activity in all my years of camping. Martin even had the pull down screen which he positioned at front of the tent under the awning. We were treated to various shows including their trip through Europe, Thailand and Tasmania. These were truly great shots Martin, and the background music really gave these nights a neat touch. Well done. What about a presentation after a forthcoming general meeting?

Alex Talay and new diver Dale Huby shared a site in the Upper Esplanade which overlooked the rest of us down below. Dale particularly enjoyed this spot as he was seen to enjoy many hours during the trip sitting in the sun in pursuit of a "singlet" tan.

However, Ted noticed that the skin on top of his ears was peeling away and advised Dale to purchase a wide brimmed hat to alleviate this problem.

Dale was not too perturbed at this and stated he would remember to put his sun stuff on his ears in future. Alex commented that Prince Charles would be in trouble if he got his ears burnt, to which Big M replied "if that happened, he'd have burns to 40% of his body."

Also Alex is no doubt more experienced than Dale as he left his hair hanging over his ears until after the holidays.

.....

The wind at Robe this year was relentless, and in the early part of the trip a big swell was running and visibility was very poor. On one of these days I suggested to Ted Cornish that we should visit Mt. Gambier and dive Ewens Ponds as he had not experienced this type of diving before. Dale and Alex also jumped at the chance and we were off, joined by Annie and Jan and respective kids Samantha, Jessica and Tara who were keen to snorkel the Ponds. At completion of the dive I noticed Alex swimming back up the channel connecting the second and third ponds. I indicated to Ted that we would not be following as there is a slight current and it would be easier to walk back. This we did and I jumped back in the first pond to observe Alex returning which turned out to be a sorry sight indeed. Apparently he clambered up on to the jetty yelling "Get it off, Teddy, Get it off!" Of course he was referring to his wetsuit, fins etc. Annie, Jan and the girls were in fits of laughter as they observed this picture of fitness and those strangers present wondered what they had struck.

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On one particular night, in fact most nights, yours truly must have been somewhat inebriated. The next morning I seemed to be missing a \$50 note from my wallet and I asked Annie as to whether she borrowed some money

from my wallet the previous night, as she has done on some occasions in the past. "No, you silly bugger, you gave it to me last night" she said. "Geez, if that's the case I'd better hide my wallet from myself in future!"

.....

One night, we went to Grey Masts restaurant with the Cornish's and the Luxfords. I must say that this was as good a restaurant as you could wish to experience and we had a great night. The next morning Annie announced that she thought her wallet was stolen from the tent when we were out as she had turned the place upside down and to no avail. Some hours later she was delighted to find it under the mattress. I too was delighted to point out to her that she must have been somewhat inebriated (pissed) to not remember what she had done with her wallet. Silence was the response. I loved it.

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Dale Huby gave us many laughs. The first was when he told us about his dive course just prior to Christmas. On this particular occasion he informed his Instructor in front of the whole class that "this wetsuit fits better than the last one, its got much more room for my Orchestra Stalls!" "So it should have," replied the Instructor, "seeing that your balls are where your arse should be!" Oh dear.

.....

Alex Talay warned us about Dale. He said that when he dives he drops everything. We observed this first hand on his first dive when he dropped the cray snare loaned to him by Alex . Boy, was he pissed! But not as pissed as the next time when he lost the second snare. I had earlier observed him swimming around with the snare in his catch bag, and warned him to cease this practice immediately as it will fall out of the bag.

Gee it was funny when he informed us that the snare fell out of his catch bag. "Oh no, oh no," he bellowed when he discovered it missing. He even turned the bag inside out in disbelief. "What did Mick tell you not to do?" said Ted. "Put the snare in the bag," replied Dale. Alex cracked up, as did the rest of us.

.....

One day we decided to drive the boats down to Cape Jaffa to dive the vicinity of Margaret Brock reef where large crays abound. It was a following sea on the way down and I began to wonder about the return trip if the wind got up a bit further. Particularly given the vast distance that we travelled to get there. Well the wind stiffened markedly and every wave was straight over the windscreen as we made our way back towards Robe. It was necessary to don wetsuit jackets and masks to make the trip more comfortable. After some fifteen minutes I announced over the radio that I had just changed over to my last 20 litres of petrol as I only carry some 65 litres in total against the larger boats which carry some 180 litres. At this point the boys barred me from proceeding and directed me to proceed to Cape Jaffa and they would return with my car and trailer. This we agreed to do, as I was aware that the caravan park also carried a liquor licence. Whilst we had virtually no money, this didn't matter as we persuaded Pat and Keith (owners) to run a tab for us. The boys thought it was hysterical when they returned to find us seated in the shade with the top of our table covered in empty stubbies. Now that's what I call improvising.

.....

New Year's eve saw a great party happening under the community tarp graciously donated by Des Williams. Some time during the night, I decided that I had had enough beer and changed over to drinking Scotch neat in eight ounce glasses with ice. It had a drastic effect and I distinctly remember losing control of my feet as they stumbled all over the place without my permission. It was then that I decided that now would be a good time to pay back Ted Cornish for drowning me as mentioned earlier. Now when you are as pissed as I was, you tend to think that you can carry out some devious doings and be completely invisible to all and sundry. So, I proceeded to my tent where I filled my nice white bucket with water and crept back down and placed it beside Rob and Helen's Landcruiser. Peter Vleugel informed me that I had been sprung by Jan and she would inform Ted of my intentions. Impossible, I thought. Nobody could have possibly seen what I was up to. However, I soon began to wonder why Ted always seemed to be in a safe spot; either amongst the crowd on the dance floor or surrounded by other people. At last my chance. Ted went off somewhere and I took up my position behind the Landcruiser with my bright white bucket (which

stood out like the proverbial doggies) and awaited his return. At what I thought to be the appropriate time I dashed out from behind my magnificent hiding spot and launched the full contents of the bucket at Ted who sidestepped same with ease. At this point it became clear to me that if I was to succeed then I must wait until I was totally sober. More on this later.

.....

Ted likes to live life in the fast lane sometimes as I observed him carry out another water throwing exercise one afternoon in the showers. You see I was giving him a hand washing the dishes outside the shower block when we heard Barry Truscott talking to someone through the louvre windows above. Ted seized his chance and filled a large pot with cold water and entered the shower block.. After confirming which cubicle Bazza was in he emptied the contents over his head. "You bastard!" cried Bazza and he sprang up onto the seat quicker than a jack rabbit out of its hole in time to see Teddy bolting for the door. "You're gone, Teddy," he cried. In later discussion the old bloke said he would not be in a hurry as Ted would need to sweat a while and he would get it when he least expected it. Maybe during a mid winter trip, eh Bazz?

.....

New Year's day is usually a rest day as far as diving is concerned as we all recover from the previous night's activities. However, Andy Mastrowicz decided he would go out for a one tanker at around 12 noon, this with Gail's blessings as long as he was back at the front beach by 2.00 pm to give the family rides on the Sea Biscuit as arranged the night before. At about that time I launched my boat and took Ted and the kids out for a ride on our Sea Biscuit, as well as others on the beach who were keen to try it. Now where was Andy? It seems the diving was great and that maybe they returned for a second tank. They arrived at the beach at around 5.00 pm to discover those waiting for him had given up. Gail was livid and proceeded to ban him from diving the next day. Anybody who even ventured near the Mastrowicz tent had their heads bitten off and Andy was canvassing all and sundry to purchase his newly acquired boat. Methinks he will obey the boss' orders next time.

.....

Bob Scott is a mischievous imp when he's had a few. He's as cheeky as anything and loves to put up the dukes to anyone who hangs it on him in jest. One night June had gone to the movies and left Bob to his own devices. Bad move. Now I must have been almost as bad as Bob as I am relying on Ted for this information. He advised me that when the little bloke had had more than he could handle, Gerry DeVries put him to bed and tucked him in. Now that I would have loved to see.

.....

Peter Vleugel joined five of us more seasoned beer drinkers for a quick afternoon session at the pub one day. After seven pots we returned and Peter then headed off with a couple of cans to fill tanks. When he returned he was nicely inebriated (pissed) and I presume consumed the mandatory bottle of red over dinner with Chris. Or did Chris drink the majority of the wine, as she too was feeling the effects of the night air. By this time Peter announced in a very slurred speech that he would just go and get a chair from his tent. Well it seems that the sight of the mattress was too much indeed for poor old Pete and he succumbed ; one of the neatest little 'back door' tricks I have witnessed in a long time. Ted remarked to Chris "Peter's not a beer drinker, is he Chris?" "Oh yes," replied Chris, "he does enjoy his beer." Obviously she missed the point.

.....

During our stay we enjoyed many a great evening meal cooked in our marvellous turbo convection oven. We even cooked the Christmas turkey in it and later on a roast lamb with all the trimmings. Whilst cooking the roast lamb I called by the Truscotts to ask how their roast was doing in their van oven. "Ya gotta be kidding," said Maree, "there won't be any roasts cooked in that oven Mick, splattering fat all over the place."

Of course I already knew this, but I still like to raise the question every trip just in case the novelty wears off. "No chance Mick," says Barry, "no chance!"

.....

Speaking of the Truscotts, another funny story evolved whilst we were visiting the Coonawarra wineries. By the time we arrived at the last winery for the day, most people had purchased some wine to take home. Barry finally found a wine that he truly liked, and he instructed Maree to buy a bottle. "What for," she replied, "you won't drink it." As I began to chuckle Barry commented that she hated to open the purse strings. "Just buy it Maree," Bazza directed in a stern voice, and she handed over \$25.00 which was 90 cents short. Bazza just shook his head.

.....

On the last night most of us found ourselves outside (and inside) Charlie and Judy's tent. Not long after Pat Reynolds produced a bottle of port, Charlie carried off the second best back door job of the trip when he went off to bed when his peepers could no longer stay awake. The snoring emanating from the bedroom left us in no doubt as to where he was. Must have been something he ate.

.....

One fine hot afternoon I had just finished lunch when my eldest unmarried daughter Samantha informed me that now would be a good time to get Ted back with a bucket of water. I glanced towards his tent and was delighted to find him totally absorbed in his crossword. I readily agreed that it was now or never and proceeded to fill by red car fridge with cold water. I then carried it via the back of the adjoining three sites to mine until I was directly opposite Ted who was seated at his table across the dirt road with his back to me. But I had to share my exhilaration with someone other than my own family, so I backtracked to the Vleugel tent to advise them of my intentions. Upon my return I noticed that Tara had joined Ted at the table, and worse still she was facing towards me. Shit, I thought, but then I heard Jess call Tara and she got up and went to Jess. With car fridge in hand I tip-toed across the dirt road and about half way across I was horrified to hear Andy yell out "what are you doing Mick?" Shit..... but wait, Ted was that engrossed in his crossword that he didn't hear Andy or me advancing towards him with all the stealth of a cat pursuing a bird. I was therefore able to walk right up behind him and empty the entire contents over his head, drowning him, the crossword and the table. Ted was indeed flabbergasted and simply uttered the words "you got me."



The Community Hall goes up while June Scott supervises



We have an erection. This was to become Rob & Helen's unofficial dining room.



Party animals ready for the new Years Eve bash



Jan Cornish - ever the court jester



Sand castle competition is on in earnest

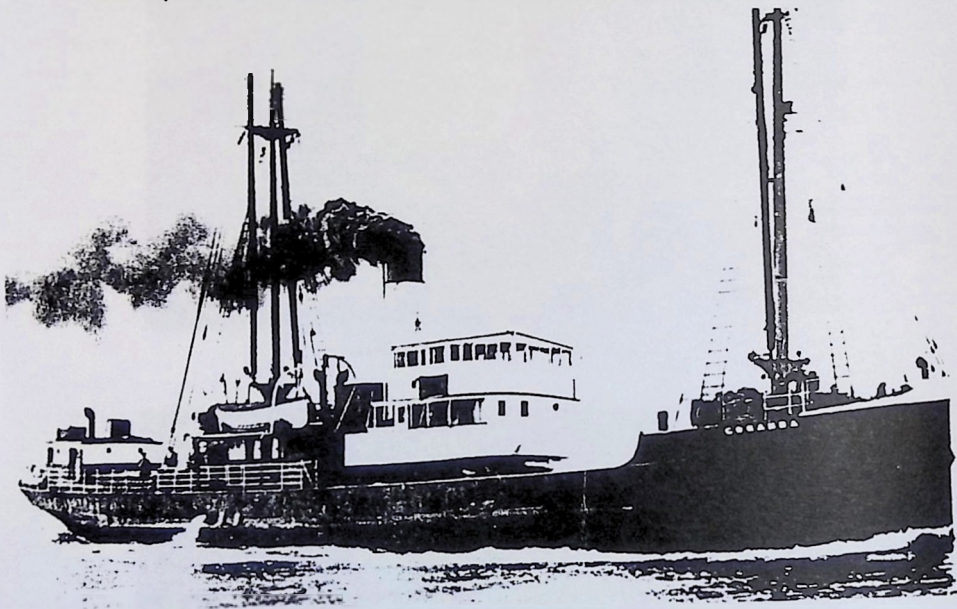


What is June doing to young Bobby?

THE CORAMBA TRAGEDY

BY JOHN ASHLEY

This story is dedicated to the seventeen sailors who lost their lives.



*T.S.S. CORAMBA leaving the Yarra River, Melbourne, for the West Coast
(La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria)*

Most divers who have been diving for some time will no doubt have heard of the Coramba tragedy as the ship that vanished without a trace in 1934. All seventeen merchant seamen on board perished, somewhere in the vicinity of Phillip Island. Over the years there have been many people, some divers and some just interested parties who have spent considerable amounts of time and money trying to locate the vessel's remains, myself being amongst that number.

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V.H.F. EMERGENCY CHANNEL..... (16)