

FATHOMS

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VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

OCT - NOV 98

FATHOMS

Official journal of the *Victorian Sub - Aqua Group*

In this issue:

OCT/NOV 1998

V.S.A.G. Committee Members		2
Editorial	Mick Jeacle	3
Life Member/Clubman of the Year		4
President's Report	Andy Mastrowicz	5
Committee Lineup 1998/99		9
VSAG Fund Raiser		10
Non Financial Members		11
The Speculant	John Ashley	12
Hotham Snow Trip	Peter Vleugel	14
Efen Tugs Dive	Des Williams	16
Thanks from Des Williams	Des Williams	19
Maritime Tot-Bits	John Ashley	20
VSAG Tennis Party		21
VSAG Christmas Dinner		22
Dive/Social Calendar		23
Tide tables - November/December 1998		25
Emergency Contact Information		27
Notes		28

Next General Meetings:

Bells Hotel
157 Moray Street (cnr. Coventry Street)
South Melbourne - 8pm sharp!
Thursday 19th November 1998
Thursday 17th December (Drinks) 1998

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Tuesday 20th October - Mick Jeacle's home
Tuesday 24th November - John Lawler's home

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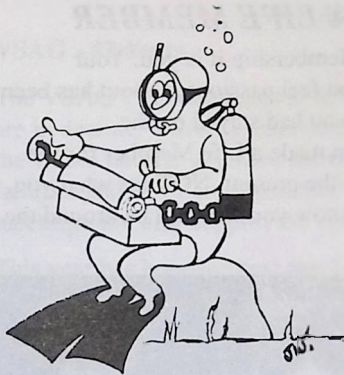
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Andy Mastrowicz, John Lawler & Leo Maybus

EDITORIAL



Well, after three years here I am writing my last editorial for FATHOMS.

It's been a great three years, and I can honestly say I have enjoyed the role immensely.

Certain satisfaction is gained from having the last say on the content of the newsletter, and I certainly have enjoyed adding the editor's notes at foot of articles. But it's time to vacate the chair and hand the reins to another committee member, and that person, I'm happy to say is Don Abell.

I am sure everyone is familiar with Don's bright and humorous writing style, and this will surely come to the fore in his role as FATHOMS editor. We can all look forward to some fine reading in future I'm sure. Please give him the support he needs.

Those present at the AGM will have witnessed the induction of Des Williams as a Life Member of VSAG. They will have also witnessed Peter Vleugel receive his Clubman of the Year award. Congratulations guys, you both earned it.

In this issue you will find a special notice regarding a proposed Garage Sale to be held as a fundraiser for the club on 28 November, 1998. I personally believe this to be a fantastic opportunity to raise maybe thousands of dollars, but only if we have commitment from members. Here is your chance to do something for your club, all you have to do is clear out your shed or garage and indeed house of those belongings you no longer have any use for. Please, please give it a go for the sake of your club.

Those members intending to attend the Christmas outing at Shannika's will need to pay the full amount of \$32 per head by the November general meeting. This will make the Social Secretary's job that much easier on the night, so please adhere to this requirement.

Finally, thank you to all those members who submitted articles to me for inclusion in FATHOMS over the past three years. It's timely to again remind dive captains of their responsibility to provide a dive report, these have been missing of late.

I now look forward to receiving my FATHOMS in the mail.

Mick Jeacle - Editor

CONGRATULATIONS

DES WILLIAMS BECOMES A LIFE MEMBER

Congratulations Des. If anybody deserves Life Membership it is you. Your tireless work over almost 20 years for the club you feel passionate about has been nothing short of fantastic. I know you now wish you had stayed on the committee, but just remember this. You have been made a Life Member for the work you have done in the past, and indeed up to the present, NOT for what you could have done or may do in the future. We all know you will still be around the club and will be keen to contribute in some way.



VSAG's President Andy Mastrowicz presents Des Williams with the Life Membership at September 1998 A.G.M.



VSAG's President Andy Mastrowicz presents Peter Vleugel with "Clubman of the Year" award.

PETER VLEUGEL

WINS VSAG CLUBMAN OF YEAR AWARD

Well done Peter. You have done everything this year, from attending social functions, general meetings, trips away and even submitting articles for FATHOMS. What's more you seemed to enjoy it. Your acceptance speech said it all when you said VSAG was a unique club where people from all different backgrounds join together in pursuit of one of life's great pleasures, and everyone gets along superbly. Let's hope your message to all and sundry to "get in there and enjoy it!" catches on and our member numbers at dives and functions increase. Keep up the good work. Oh, and by the way. Next year points will be taken off if you again suffer Warm Water Syndrome upon returning from another overseas jaunt.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 1998

BY ANDY MASTROWICZ

VSAG - 43 Years

The VSAG Club continues to remain strong even as we see other private clubs are in decline. VSAG's main strength is in its social nature, which encompasses the whole family. As more members enter their middle years with growing families and other commitments, they still find time to come along to Club meetings and also support the various activities provided throughout the year.

This year has been the best that I can remember in the number of people not only attending the dives (those that weren't cancelled due to inclement weather), but also the general meetings held each month. The number of members and guests at each meeting has increased dramatically this year. An impressive line-up of guest speakers such as Pat Washington (President, VERFISH Vic), John Carrol (Port Philip Pilots), Des Williams (MAAV), and(Bicheno Dives), as well as Slide and video nights by Leo Maybus, John Ashley, Peter Vleugel and Des Williams have been a great draw-card, together with a great venue at Bells Hotel.

Club Membership has increased by 10%, with 7 new members joining VSAG this year. I would like to welcome all of them again on behalf of the Committee, and hope they will continue to support us with their attendance and input. The committee will continue its drive for new members bearing in mind the future viability of any club without young members to keep it going. It was interesting to note at the recent Sunken Assets 98 Seminar the number of divers in attendance and the average age of those divers. Where were the younger divers?

The Year has seen the VSAG Committee schedule some 58 events. These are 11 General Meetings, 31 day Dives, 7 Dive Trip/Weekends and 9 Social events. There were, however, 21 dives/weekends cancelled mainly due to bad weather (the El Nino effect rather than the El NoNo bothered effect) as can be seen by the attendances at other functions. A total of 853 persons attended VSAG functions, at an average of 23 per function. Not bad for a Club with 60 members on the books, 40% of who are in any way active.

Year's highlights:-

Last Christmas trip saw the largest contingent yet of VSAG members and their families (totaling 52) who spent a fun-filled and enjoyable 2 weeks at the SeaVu Caravan Park at Robe, South Australia. . Don Abell's Annual Easter long weekend at Tidal River saw another record broken, with 82 members and visitors attending on 24 campsites. The diving seemed to take second place as members opted for only one day's diving and three of resting, or should I say socialising in the VSAG way!!

Pat Reynolds took 15 VSAGers and their wives on a diving holiday to the Philippines to discover some new wrecks. Bob Scott escorted 6 divers to King Island and back safely, and Des Williams chaperoned 5 divers on a return trip to Eaglehawk Neck for the Queens Birthday weekend.

Social functions held this year have been :

- * The annual Tennis Day, with more than 40 members and family and friends,
- * The annual Xmas function held at La Spaghettata in Lygon Street which was organised by Jerry, Leo and Robert and was well attended by over 50 members, partners and friends,
- * Sunday excursion to the Phillip Island Seal Display which was attended by approximately 25-30 members and their family and friends,
- * Sunken Assets '98 at RMIT at which VSAG had good attendance of around 17 members
- * Father's Day Yum Cha, organised by Gerry DeVries, and well attended by 36 People,
- * Weekend Snow trip to Mt. Hotham, organised by Leo Maybus, with 25 attendees.

On a more financial note, the Club funds (although in a reasonably healthy state) have been declining over the last few years since our Jeacle-inspired wine windfall, and some work is needed in putting together some fund-raising activities over the coming months into next year. The membership fees were

increased to \$55 (fees have not increased for several years), and have been increased this year to cover the ongoing printing, production and mailing costs of Fathoms, which as we all know is the life blood of the VSAG.

SDF has once again been in the trenches fighting on behalf of most divers, the proposed new Government legislation that yet again seeks to impose tighter catch limits on the diving fraternity. VSAG wholly supports the role the SDF plays, and on behalf of all divers and members of VSAG I wish to thank the SDF Committee once again for their efforts over the year. This year has seen the SDF Committee put on a great Seminar called "Sunken Assets 98" that was well attended by some 300 people.

It is with regret that we see two long-standing committee members standing down from committee duty to pursue other activities. I need not mention the esteem and high regard that Bob Scott and Des Williams are held in by all that know them. They have been the mainstays of the club for many years and I can't thank them both enough.

Finally, I would sincerely like to thank each and every Member of the VSAG Committee who have put in both their valuable time and considerable effort over the past 12 months in organising not only the diving, but also the social aspects that we have enjoyed over this past year.

A lot of patience and time goes into organising the dinners and excursions and trips that members enjoy. Often all the planning, headaches, worries, etc. that go into organising a successful function get put into the background and forgotten after the event. So I would like to thank those people who have put that time and effort in this year because without those tireless workers, then the Club would not be what it is today.

I would also like to say thank you for having me as President this past year - it has been an interesting and informative experience and I hope I have lived up to the expectations of the Members and of VSAG.

It also gives me great pleasure on behalf of the Committee to put forward a member nomination for a VSAG Life Membership. This nomination is put forward after considerable deliberation by the Committee. In 43 years VSAG

has only 9 life members. This nomination goes to someone who has been with the Club for nearly twenty years. Over this period he has worked tirelessly while on and off the Committee, with a dedication and commitment seldom seen or acknowledged these days. In his 20 years with the Club he has served in every role available from President to Editor, SDF Delegate and other roles. His commitment to VSAG and diving in general has been unparalleled. He will join the ranks of Life Members such as Tony Tipping, Bob Scott, John Goulding, Barry Truscott, to name but a few. I have much pleasure in nominating Des Williams to life membership.

Just a few more facts about Des Williams. He joined back in 1979 and was soon active on the Committee in the role of Editor. He single handedly made Fathoms what it is today. Back then he would produce the complete magazine - from typing the information on an old typewriter to hand-printing all the copies on a Gestetner machine - before posting them out. After 3 years as editor he took over the role of President for one year after that he was never far from the action doing several more stints as Editor. Even when not on the committee Des always had some input to the club. He was a founding member of the MAAV and is still active with Heritage Victoria Group now. He is also a long-standing VSAG delegate and Committee member of the Scuba Divers Federation of Victoria.

Over the years Des's propensity to scribble has produced something in the order of 261 articles for Fathoms, a fact alone that makes his input unsurpassed. That's 2 articles per issue on average. In recent years he has done a magnificent PR job of looking after and making welcome the many guests and newcomers to VSAG.

His attention to detail leaves nothing to chance as many will attest to having enjoyed the overseas trips and other events Des has organised. Who can forget the Jack Loney talks? Des' intimate knowledge of the diving industry and the people in it is well known and his mentoring will be sorely missed by the committee.

Ed Note - Great job Andy. I know you put a lot of research into this article. Des, and indeed all other members are

SOME CHANGES IN NEW COMMITTEE LINEUP

There have been a few changes to the VSAG Committee portfolios for the ensuing year.

Full details are on page 2. Briefly, the main changes are as follow:-

- * John Lawler takes on the Treasurer's job.
- * Don Abell is the new FATHOMS Editor.
- * Robert Birtles is Points Scorer. (Hope this doesn't stress him out too much.)
- * John Mills and Helen Fryday join the ranks for the first time and take on the positions of Assistant Editor and Social Secretary respectively.

Welcome to these two new members. I hope your terms will be long and productive.

COMMITTEE MEETING DATES/VENUES 1998/1999

October 20	Mick Jeacle	April 20	Don Abell
November 24	John Lawler	May 25	Leo Maybus
December	No meeting	June 22	Priya Cardinaletti
January 26	Pat Reynolds	July 20	Gerry DeVries
February 23	Peter Vleugel	August 24	Helen Fryday
March 23	Robert Birtles	September 21	Andy Mastrowicz

SPECIAL NOTICE

NO DECEMBER GENERAL MEETING

Members please note that we are not able to secure our meeting room for December at Bell's Hotel due to the numerous office parties etc. booked at this time of year. Accordingly, there will be no General Meeting held on Thursday 17 December. However for those wanting to meet for some good cheer and finger food on the evening, please come along to Bell's Hotel for a social get together before Christmas. This has been the norm. for the past few years now and has proved to be a resounding success.

As usual, a general meeting will be held in January to compensate and maintain eleven meetings per year. A reminder notice to this effect will appear in the December/January edition of FATHOMS.

VSAG FUND RAISER
GARAGE SALE - NOVEMBER 1998

"JUST JUNK & HIGH CLASS TRASH."

You may have noticed that the club funds have been dwindling at a rapid rate over the past couple of years and this has been attributable to a number of reasons, not the least of which was a complete overhaul of the club compressor, including a new petrol motor.

Your Committee is concerned with this deterioration, and accordingly we request your help in what could be a financial bonanza for the club if we all pitch in and make it happen.

Next Saturday morning, or before if you can, go into your shed or garage and clean out those items which you have no further use for i.e. the old hand mower, the anchors or oars from your past boat, your old wetsuit that doesn't fit any more, any old furniture, shelving, plumbing fittings, books, old bottles. But don't stop there! Now go inside and go through each room of the house. That ugly painting you have hated for years could impress somebody else no end. The list is endless.

When you have put everything aside, make a list and send it to Mick Jeacle by say 7th November. It is planned to hold the garage sale on Saturday 28th November.

Now, what we also need is a venue. Somebody with a big shed or garage to set out the goods. These will need to be transported to the site during the week leading up to the Saturday. Any body who can assist in this area please let me know.

A garage sale is usually an all day affair. Start time would be say 8.00am and closing at 4.00pm for tidy up and drinks. Maybe a BBQ could follow if interest dictates.

**SO COME ON FOLKS - LET'S GET THOSE FUNDS UP AGAIN
AND THE CLUB BACK INTO THE COMFORT ZONE.**

Mick Jeacle 0359 712786

NON FINANCIAL MEMBERS

We regret to advise that the following members who had not paid their 1998/99 subscription of \$55 as at 22nd September are now reading their last FATHOMS unless payment is made by the end of October.

Brian LYNCH *

Jim TURNER*

Russell OLORENSHAW *

Terry BROOKS *

Bill HAYES

Igor CHERNISHOV *

Robert SWOFFER

Mike WEBER *

Chris LLEWELLYN

Peter JONES

Tony ROSSI *

Graeme BLANCHARD

Greg BOYLES

Dave MACHEN

Andrew GREGORY

Alisdair STEWART

* Denotes also late last year (and probably every other year!)

Note: Members who may not be able to pay their subscription at the present time should contact Treasurer John Lawler on 9589 4020 (A/H)

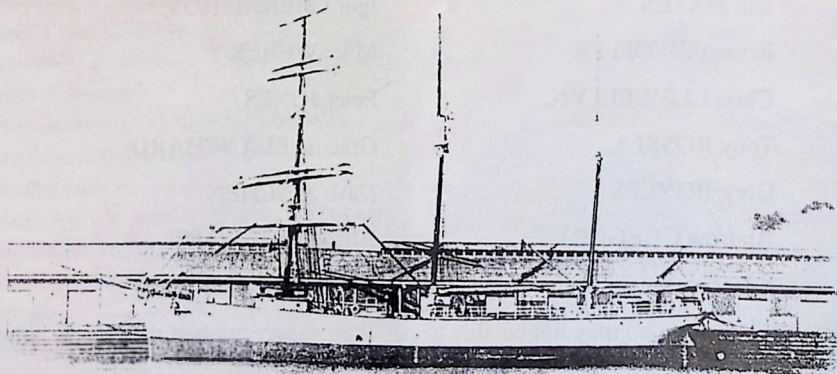
Subscriptions barely cover the cost of production of FATHOMS, so please pay immediately.

THE SPECULANT 1895 - 1911

BY JOHN ASHLEY

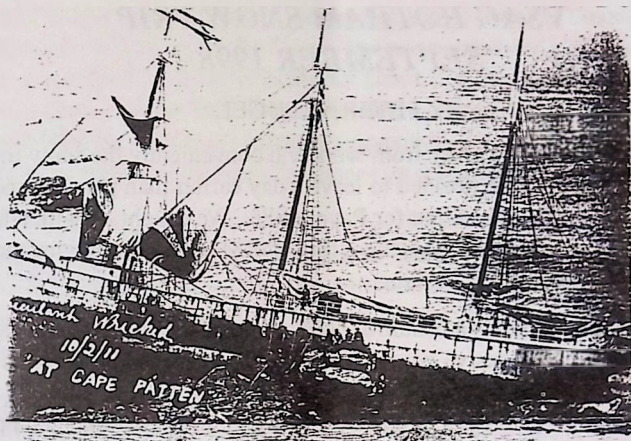
The *Speculant* was a fine looking sailing ship and was typical of the coastal traders of the day, of sail that is. You see, by the early 1900's to see a sailing ship was becoming rare and for every ship of sail there were ten steamships.

The days of sail were numbered as steamships were able to be on time and in most cases required less crew to operate the vessel.



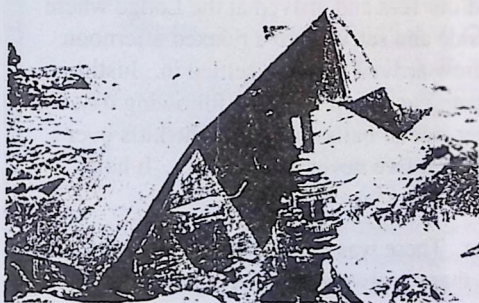
The barquentine "Speculant" at Melbourne docks

The *Speculant* operated mainly in Australian waters carrying general cargo of all types. She not only worked out of large ports such as Sydney and Melbourne, but was a regular visitor to ports such as Portland. It was in fact on a return voyage from Portland to Melbourne when she ran aground at Cape Patten in a thick fog and was totally wrecked, but luckily no lives were lost and she was in ballast at the time.



For those VSAG members who know the Great Ocean Road, especially at Cape Patten, will understand why the *Speculant* will never appear on our dive calendar, and besides when the Great Ocean Road was widened during the 1920's most of the wreck site was covered with rocks. However, some anchors have been raised over the years and one is mounted at the Apollo Bay foreshore.

For the serious wreck diver there are still some parts of the ship that can be identified close inshore, but the exact location is hard to find and my memory is starting to fade with age.



Within one year of the vessel going ashore it was reduced to a bow section lying on the rocks, very similar in fact to the remains of the "Speke" on Phillip Island. Don't go looking for the remains of the bow section as it's under tons of rocks.

The vessel's bow section after months of pounding seas. (courtesy Miss L. Pengilley)

VSAG HOTHAM SNOW TRIP SEPTEMBER 1998

BY PETER VLEUGEL

Chris and I decided to slip away from work and conveniently the snow trip was just around the corner. We decided to leave a day earlier than planned and leave on the Thursday morning heading for Paynesville. We caught up with a friend who owns and runs a caravan park there for a coffee and a few laughs, then decided to spend the night at Metung.

The Moorings at Metung is a beautiful holiday resort with unlimited water activities and lots of expensive boats. Dinner and an early night saw us up early the next day ready for a long walk and check out the local sites. From Metung to the local potter to pick up some pottery that caught Chris' eye and then up the hill to Hotham. We followed the road from Metung via Swanreach, Tambo Upper then to Bruthen. You couldn't help but notice the damage caused to the surrounding areas by the recent floods, and it was more evident as the elevation increased, Swifts Creek was hit hard. The amount of debris and very large trees completely uprooted and stacked against other trees was amazing. In some places, the debris was up to 4.0m up into other trees, the roads are being rebuilt where the Tambo river swept them away.

Moving on to Omeo, the temperature was 20 but as we climbed the mountain, it soon dropped to about 8. Its very pretty country around these hills. We soon arrived at the gates to Mt. Hotham, paid our fees and arrived at the Lodge where we were all staying, loaded our gear inside and settled into a relaxed afternoon sipping a red or three. The rest of the crew arrived and also settled in. Justin Liddy and I worked out how we were going to get up early the following day, ski all the slopes at Hotham, catch a chopper ride to Falls and ski all the hills over there for the rest of the day. I didn't tell him I've never skied before. It helps when you have a few drinks.

Where is the snow? - it was almost gone. There was only a small amount on the ground and very few lifts operating but there is always hope.... but the following

day, it started to rain and didn't stop. Some of the crew went to Dinner Plain and others went to the pub to watch the footy. It was an interesting afternoon listening to a one-eyed Melbourne supporter (Jan Cornish) get quite enthusiastic about the win (Bad luck the following week Jan, better luck next year) - although Ted explained that Jan was quite subdued compared with other closer games. Quite a few of us went to Swindlers for dinner on Saturday night and had a lovely evening.

An early night, bright eyed and bushy tailed on Sunday, we left the lodge and headed for Wangaratta. Had a lunch date with Alisdair and Susan and James, a very enjoyable few hours with them. We left there at 3pm struggled home and safely arrived by 7pm.

Just a note to say thanks to everyone for helping us enjoy a nice weekend away. Justin, you will have to wait until next year to assess my talents on skis, so be sure you are there. Leo, thanks for arranging the use of your Lodge for the weekend. Its always a considerable effort to arrange these weekends and if you didn't make it, well, you missed out on another unique VSAG weekend trip away. Hope it snows next year.

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 October

Thursday 17 December (Drinks)

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

EDEN TUGS

BY DES WILIAMS

On Friday 18th September 1998, I journeyed over to Eden N.S.W arriving at 7PM, for a couple of days diving on the scuttled ocean tugboats.

I travelled over with John Allen, with whom I have been diving lately in the old hard-hat gear, and we met up with two of his friends Rachel Brennan and Peter Stewart-Smith, making our diving group four. We stayed in the Twofold Dive Centre Dive Lodge, which was very comfortable indeed. We had the whole place to ourselves.

Saturday morning produced on-shore winds, which meant that diving the tugs was out of the question. Much disappointment! We motored across Twofold Bay to the north shore, where we dropped into filthy water and the usual bare rock territory with urchins and the odd blue grouper, so characteristic of N.S.W diving. Very boring and with some icy water dribbling into my drysuit, I exited after only five minutes. The others continued the dive without me. The leak in the suit turned out to be due to an improper seal of the collar, caught in my warm wooley bear garment, so I will be more careful next time.

The rest of Saturday, we rested and watched videos of some of our recent hard-hat dives and John showed one on the dive he made on the tug Tasman Hauler, at Eden, in full standard dress heavy gear, last year. So, our appetites were well and truly whetted for a dive on the wreck the next day. Had a great meal at the Australasian Hotel that evening, with dive operator Peter Hall and his wife Lorna. Peter's dive boat is a large shark-cat, which is very comfortable and he had plenty of dive and whale-watching stories for us that evening.

Eden is now a very big whale watching centre, as the once almost extinct mammoths have again returned to the place, where they were slaughtered in great numbers. The township of Eden now derives many tourist dollars from whale-watching and Peter quite often encounters them whilst out diving.