

# FATHOMS

EST. 1954



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# VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

AUG - SEP 99

# 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 September 1999  
Thursday 21st October 1999

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Monday 19h July - Gerry Devnie's home  
Monday 23rd August - Robert Birtle's home  
Monday 20th September - Andy Mastrowicz's home

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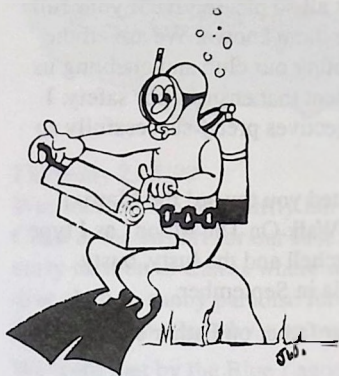
S.D.F. DELEGATES:

Andy Mastrowicz, John Lawler & Leo Maybus



## EDITORIAL

It's now early August and I know this issue is being prepared later than it should but I have just taken a fabulous holiday in South America. By the next magazine I hope to put together an article to tell you about my experiences from the Amazon to the Galapagos.



Articles were thin on my return but my thanks to the contributors for this bumper issue. In my last editorial I suggested that July/ August is usually a good time for stable conditions with good clear diving. The articles in this issue back up my expectation. There has been some great dives which should convince those of us that hibernate in Winter that their judgement is not necessarily supported by

experience. If you're not sure we have a number of 1 tank days scheduled so that you can be confident of getting back into warm clothes quickly if the sun is not beating on your back.

It is good to see Des diving and, of course, giving me an article on his super sub. dive. You will also see Des has hit the headlines in media watch with his continuing quest for the Coramba. Keep at it Des and you will find the golden fleece.

I also see that the wreck of the Waratah has been found off South Africa. There would be a few good stories from this old steamer if she could talk. Our own Herb Epstein and his intrepid Atlantic Underwater Scubaclub mounted an expedition in 1978 to try to find the resting place of the old lady. They spent 10 days with sonar and visual search but not enough luck. The Waratah story may be pieced together in years to come. This should encourage Des with his search.

You will also see a reminder to pay outstanding subs. The committee has plenty of important things on its agenda to promote dives and social functions for members so please help by paying your outstandings NOW.

A note of thanks to Peter Jones for his idea and support in the current Wine Offer being used to raise club funds . This will benefit us all so please give it your full support. Anyone else with good ideas should make them known. We are all the beneficiaries . Everything we do is aimed at promoting our club and enabling us to enjoy our sport in the best way and with equipment that ensures our safety. I am sure you will agree we have achieved these objectives pretty successfully so far.

Now my final tip. Many will remember that I pointed you toward the Matrix. What a film. Well I am listening to the music for "Walk On The Moon" as I type this editorial. Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin, Joni Mitchell and the lusty, busty Dusty Springfield. It should be released in Australia in September.

Hope you enjoy this issue of Fathoms and ring your father on Father's Day.

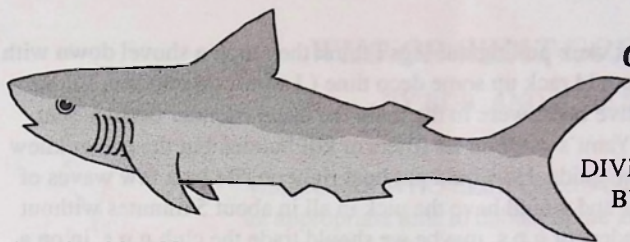
*Editor - Don Abell.*

## **VICTORIAN SUB AQUA GROUP**

### **ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS**

**YOUR ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION FOR  
MEMBERSHIP IS NOW DUE!!!**

**IF YOU HAVE NOT RENEWED YOUR SUBSCRIPTION  
PLEASE FORWARD NOW TO THE TREASURER  
JOHN LAWLER**



## CHUUK 99

WRECK  
DIVING AT ITS BEST  
BY BOB SCOTT

*Thursday 23/5/99*

Was kick off day Pat Nifty Ian picked me up about midday to meet Peter and Chris at the airport for our first leg of our journey to Brisbane where met up with curly then on to Cairns where we met up with a couple of friends who work at a dive shop in sunny paradise for few drinks before 11 pm. flight to Guam where had to endure a lengthy stop over until our plane for Chuuk ( Truk )

We were met by the Blue Lagoon lads after we cleared customs and they got us settled into our new abodes for next 10 days . For those who have been to Chuuk before the old place has not changed much although they are doing a lot of work on accommodation buildings on the left hand side of the drive it will a lot better when they get all the units finished

We were suppose to have a couple of dives on the afternoon when we were settled but was a bit of a mix up and there was no boats available so we missed out but Pat made sure that they made for it with two night dives during our stay

The diving on the whole was as good as it could be although some of the wrecks are starting to deteriorate now and the artefacts like trucks cars and such are really showing the ravages of time tropical storms and salt water and I suspect divers and dive boats anchors also .

All the old favourites were invaded by our group and a few others to boot AIKOKU, NIPPO , FUJIKAWA, GOSI SAN FRANSICO HEIAN YAMAGARI SHINKOKU SANKISAN RIO DE JANEIRO ( and of course they are all MARU' S ) to name a few.

Each day we did two dives with a night dive on a couple of days apart on the wrecks there seemed to be light on reef fish this trip probably from over fishing and the bang sticks but on a number of occasions we did see some large pelagic Tuna Barracuda Eagle Rays Curly and Peter saw a large Shovel Nose shark to



boot. But I think they were pulling our legs I think they took a shovel down with them just so as they could rack up some deco time ( I won't go into that I'll let them explain ) The dive boats were in the main the usual islander banana boat motors 40 or 45 h.p. Yami's with no air filters or kill buttons but the driver knew his business as did the guide. He would put boat right on site by a few waves of his hand to the driver and would have the pick in all in about 5 minutes without the aid of depth sounders or g.p.s. maybe we should trade the club g.p.s. in on a Chuukee what do you say Don

I had the pleasure to meet one of the chiefs of one the many islands Kimiuo who with an authority on the history of Chuuk lagoon. Clause Lindemann located most of the wrecks in the late 50s and 60s and I was lucky enough to have my copy of his book signed by both gentlemen .

I will let one of the other members of our group go into the in's and out's of the diving.

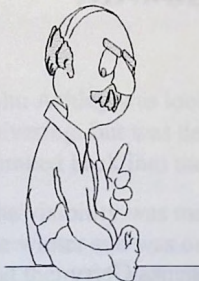
The meals have improved a little since my last trip, the grounds as usual were neat at the resort But the township and roads going to town had deteriorated somewhat so we never ventured out much only out to the Japanese restaurant for a change and socialised at the out door bar for a quite ale or two.

And that's where we met" O MY GAUD " Diane Strong with all her own dips ground coffee biscuits and health food and of course my battery for my Niceness and it was this lady that introduced me to chief Kimmo and Clause. She was a barrel of fun and energy enthusiasm and dead keen hard core diver I'm not sure VSAG. is ready for her yet and after we got back to Guam we did a bit of shopping and again Diane arranged for us to have a barby and drinks at her house on the cliffs. Boy what a view she has from any part of the house and then the next day she picked up the 5 Batchelor's in her two seater pick up and showed us the sites of Guam and she knows every body and every body knows her and if they didn't know her they soon did and she made sure they did. Diane was great fun and I would like thank her for what she did for us

But one thing is for sure it sure is nice to be home again I would like to thank Pat for all the work he put in arranging this trip and I would like to thank the rest group for making this trip the beauty that it was.

## WHO OR WHAT GOES PLONK

BY BOB AND JUNE SCOTT



V.S.A.GERS WHO ELSE Queens birthday weekend was an appropriate time to dabble in the art of wine tasting June and I got ahead start and had a sickie and was on the road around 11 am. Dawdled up the Hume, got as far as Seymour when the worms started to bite, so we pulled into a great little place in the main street, which was originally a post office now a first class restaurant, and served up the best Devonshire teas of all time with real scones not reheated while you wait. Must go for a short drive again just for the scones.

We headed of on our second leg of our journey and got as far as Glenrowan and checked out Ned Kelly's museum, then we headed up to Wangaratta then onto Beechworth, booked into a nice clean warm cabin, unloaded the car and home was ready. Gerry organised a half 44 drum fire, some wood and got a fire going, we had a cleansing ale a chin wag with Paul owner of the caravan park. Then the Brincatt family and ourselves went into town had a great meal at the pub, young Christine ate 9 chicken nuggets and chips then backed up for a desert and a glass of lolly water.

Saturday Ian Kerry June and myself did some sights, like the court house the old jail a roof garden, then hit the wineries and collected my stamps (I'm sure someone will fill you in about the stamps). We bowled over 6 on Saturday and 7 on Sunday which leaves 5 more stamps to get before next April.

Sunday was great Gerry in his well-organised way had a mini bus ready by 9 am lunches loaded in the boot and we were on our way, we hopped into whites reds ports muscats in any order it was good fun, I won't show my ignorance by trying to tell what side of the hill the grapes were grown on or from direction the wind was blowing. But I will reintegrate both June and myself had good time for every different wine we tasted all June could say "I'm confused" "good job we were sharing the same samples.



Now June wants to give out some achiever awards for the weekend,  
Andy and Gail censored??  
Barry and Marie the quiet achievers  
Ian and Kerry gourmet extraordinaire  
Andrea the best screamer  
Charlie the best flasher (even in those freezing conditions)  
Josie for her fire safety  
And not last Gerry for one of the best non diving weekends thanks Gerry

## **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 16 September

Thursday 21 October

Come and enjoy a delicious meal before the meeting

which commences at 8pm.

## *NEW SUBMARINE DIVE 27TH JUNE 1999*

BY DES WILLIAMS

John Ashley was looking for some warmer clothes and Darren Pearce was shivering, but was determined to get stuck into his lunch, as John Lawler and I climbed back into the boat after a brilliant dive on the "New" submarine.

The visibility was magnificent, around 20M I guess, and the sea was oily smooth, the winter sun was out and beginning to warm us up, as we all opened lunches and thermos flasks. Mick Jeacle called across to us "How was that Dessy? One of those out of the box winter days,eh?"

I had to agree! It was worth getting out of a warm bed for the drive down to Sorrento in a pea-souper of a fog. Had a hot coffee with Robert Birtles, Leo Maybus and Gerry DeVries at the Sorrento aquarium, whilst the warm sun blazed through the windows on our backs - what a great start to a wonderful days diving. Best of all, no crowds of people!!

John Lawler was D.C, so we had four divers in each of three boats belonging to Mick, John and Robert Swoffer. Now, Swoff's boat doesn't have a windscreen, so the boys joined us at the Heads looking like they had been to a Panda's convention after the high speed run to the Rip. What Swof lacks in the windscreen department, he makes up for in speed.

Mick led us to the wreck site and we dropped a buoy at the GPS hotspot and motored around that to pinpoint the sub wreck. The combination of Big Mick and a GPS on a foggy morning is impossible to beat. The minute I dropped our shot-line and saw it streak down through the clear blue water, I knew we were in for a good one.

John and Darren geared up first and dived whilst John Lawler and I climbed into our gear once the boys had left the boat. We rolled over the side into a gin clear Bass Strait and made our way to the shot-line. We then set watches, dumped buoyancy and plummeted down the shot-line to see the familiar cigar shaped outline of the submarine below us. We paused at the conning-tower, to adjust

buoyancy and swam towards the bow clearly visible in front of us. What a wonderful sight to see this old warrior in such tranquil conditions and wonder if she may at any moment blow her ballast tanks and surface.

Our tour continued back to the hatches aft of the conning-tower, where we encountered Leo Maybus adorned with his flashlight collection. We dropped down into the bowels of the sub and swan aft to exit at another hatch. Oh, the visibility!!

John and I dropped to the sand at the propellor shaft, it was 120ft on my depth gauge and time for us to cruise back to the shot-line. This was a most leisurely dive, I was as relaxed as I think I have ever been underwater, we really enjoyed ourselves, even the 3M deco safety stop was fun.

The afternoon dive was also brilliant, whilst the other two boats chose to dive on Lonsdale Reef, John and I had a wonderful time drifting on the very last of the flood tide just inside the Heads. We saw every kind of fish imaginable, dozens of Blue Devils, a huge cuttlefish, sweep, boarfish, huge leatherjackets and many more. Darren kept the boat above us and I looked up to see the boat clearly above me at one stage, when we were in 22M of water!!

We explored many huge caves and ledges and at the end of the dive spotted two lovely big crays at the back of a deep ledge, too far for our short arms!! The colours of the sponges alone on this dive were amazing and some of the cup sponges were as big as I have ever seen before. Naturally we surfaced with very broad grins after this one and Darren was there to pick us up. Another hot cuppa and we joined the other boys at their dive site on the wrecks stacked together on Lonsdale Reef. The water there was also like gin and had there been a newspaper on the bottom at 6M, it would have been possible to read it!

We returned to the boat ramp at 3.30PM and dressed in the warm sunshine, a top day, thanks to the boys who bought their boats.



## SCALLOP DIVE - 11TH JULY

BY ROBERT BIRTLES

As with all dives, the start point was the night before when our dive captain sacrifices his nocturnal activities due to phone sitting, eagerly waiting for divers to book a place. Apart from Kate (who was quick of the mark) nothing happened so cancellation was a possibility. However this was not to be, as the reliable barked through the phone followed by Swoff, both offering boats. Where were the divers? The end result was Big Mick, Swoff and his visitor (Michael), Kate and myself. Note to tony - it wasn't a good idea to let her out of your sight for the day - Mate! Mate!

As the weather looked promising (even though rain was forecast) we changed the dive to Sorrento with our fall back being Rye scallops if necessary.

Conditions on the day were perfect. The Rye/Rosebud area was oily glass flat. Queenscliff had only the slightest wind ripple. point Lonsdale being similar but with a cross swell. The water was reasonably clear, blue and tempting. The elements certainly rewarded those who forfeited what ever they do first thing in the morning.

Even though Swoff kindly offered water transport we headed in Mick's boat to his favourite reef off Queenscliff. It was one & a half hours before slack which by the look in Mick's eye was not a surprise. The delay gave him the excuse I think he was looking for - that being to squid fish off Point Lonsdale. While Mick mucked around with his ?????--- hand line, the rest of us talked sh??, sorry not all like that, Kate was the exception.

As luck would have it he actually hooked one on his second cast but had difficulty in landing it so he called Birtles for advise. Pearls of wisdom were abundant in particular the fact you leave squid in the water until they unload their defence. This of course was ignored, "Rant, snap, snarl, whose going to tell me about landing squid". The rest is obvious, the squid took aim and splattered the side of Mick's pristine Haines. Did we find this amusing???

The expression on his face can only be described as shock/horror, followed by amazement that something (like a fragile squid) had actually defied him. After

unsuccessfully trying to repeat his/our catch, time had come to dive.

Due to perfect conditions, outside the heads became an option but we decided to follow plan thus headed back to Queenscliff. Four divers went in on one drift line. Swoff whimpered out thus became boat master which in hind sight was a high honour bestowed upon him. The dive was, one of a pleasant scenic slow drift. Good decapod territory but none to be seen however if one got their kicks out of scenery then it was a good dive. bottles were found but nothing of significance.

Following the dive and during lunch, Mick unsuccessful jigged for squid - again. No luck so we headed for Rye to relieve the bottom of some scallops, "some" being the operative word. As dive captain but having no control at this point, Birtles plotted the mark for what was to be a lucrative harvest.

Whilst gearing up this huge bull seal pulled up along side the boat, rolled over, snorted and did other things seals do but basically just hung around for maybe 15 minutes or so. Due to the obvious growth on it's nose we think it was one of the regulars which hangs out around the channel markers. it certainly wasn't hesitant about our presence.

By now, Kate Swoff and Michael had pulled the pin so Mick and I went over to scour the bottom. It was rather cold but we were diving for 5 we had to endure the freeze. This wouldn't have been so bad if there were some scallops to be had.

Another seal decided to join us which, when combined with the large numbers of spider crabs sniffing around offered a little entertainment. At dives end we had collected a couple of dozen reach before heading for the top. The scallops were of excellent quality with medium size shells and very very healthy.

We then headed back to the ramp for clean up (remember the squid stains) and off to Tony's Bar and grill for a few long ones.

Summary : A good relaxing dive, no hassles, no effort and a few laughs.

Footnote: Anticipating Mick's response (already threatened) I have to point out that one needs to have faith in a dive captain's report. If you can't believe the captain then who can you trust. The captain is the unbiased reporter of the day.

## ***DIVE REPORT - 11 JULY 1999***

BY MICK JEACLE

The calendar indicated Scallop Dive - one tank. Maybe this was the reason only five divers were to board my boat on this mid-winter's day as the weather and sea conditions could only be described as superb for this time of year in Melbourne.

For the record those who ventured out of the lounge room were Robert Birtles, Kate Cain, Robert Swoffer and his mate Michael and yours truly. I must admit it didn't look too inviting as it rained from Frankston to about Rye on the way down, but then it continued to improve as the day went on with flat calm seas and bright sunshine providing perfect conditions not always present in the summer months.

It soon became clear that the day was not to be wasted on a one tank scallop dive. Those members who elected not to come because of the scheduled dive should realise that the dive captain, through consensus, may consider alternative diving activity, which is what occurred as we each loaded two tanks and headed for the Heads.

Inspection of the tide tables indicated a wait of some two hours before slack water flood, and with the current fairly raging I decided to while away an hour or so at Point Lonsdale fishing for calamari. Our chief sceptic, Robert Birtles could not believe it when after about 20 seconds of my first cast I announced that I had one on the line. I requested Robert to get the net to ensure my catch would reach the dinner table, informing him to merely entrap the critter and not to lift the net out of the water. No sooner had I told him this, in plain English, that he swiftly lifted the net to chest height, a split second after which the squid let fly with its black, slimy, glutinous ink which covered the boat from side window to water's edge. Unfortunately this only missed Robert by centimetres, more through outstandingly good luck, rather than good management. Now I know that as dive captain Robert will have submitted an article in this magazine. I am also quite certain that he will twist the truth around to make me the villain of this story. It won't wash Robert, I have three witnesses.



With an hour to slack, we proceeded to the reefs off Queenscliff. Robert Swoffer elected not to dive due to illness the previous evening, and all through the night. This enabled the remaining four to dive together, made possible by a slight current and favourable visibility in the vicinity of forty feet.

This turned out to be an anchor dive, as distinct from a cray dive. Beady eyes Birtles first discovered a small Danforth which was not suitable to my craft. But it was not long afterwards that he located a large Danforth which will be ideal for the Refuge Cove mooring. No doubt Robert was delighted when I relieved him of this heavy burden and attached it to our drift line. This saw them all anxiously turning around every couple of minutes to wait for the big Lloyd as I hopped across the bottom carrying my second weight belt. However, it was worth it and will enable me to return Andy's anchor, even though I'm sure he's forgotten about it by now.

The dive was relaxing (for the other three) and enjoyable, and the water was not too cold given the time of year. The reefs in this area never cease to delight, with their colour and ledges and overhangs, producing myriad plant and fish life, and of course the elusive decapod, if you're lucky.

But luck didn't play a part this day, and who could care less? The diving, the company, the weather and indeed the warm sun, was what it's all about.

Lunch was taken, and a brief sojourn to Point Nepean where I again chased the unco-operative squid. These are finicky animals - some days they attack the lure with gusto, and others they totally ignore it. Ah well, I was only really filling in time between dives. Between dives? In the middle of winter? That's a fact, brought about by the excellent conditions and warm sunshine.

Rob Brittles and I were to be the only divers for the second dive. As the magazine indicated a scallop dive, this was decided upon as the sea was like a mirror, and I was anxious to once again check out the area directly out from the Rye pier. I let Brittles choose the location given that he is a "killer" and he informed all and sundry of his local knowledge when it came to scallop fishing. When Kate stated she would love to take home a feed of scallops, but did not want to dive for them, Robert offered to be the provider, but of course this generous offer would be subject to the age old system of barter trade. I do not

wish to incur the wrath, or indeed undoubted censorship of the newsletter "collator", by stating herein just what Robert suggested to Kate as fair exchange for a couple of dozen scallops. Suffice to say Kate was unmoved by the silly old bloke.

The water at Rye has got to be the coldest in Victoria at this time of the year. Visibility was as good as it gets here, but the scallops were fairly scarce. After a bottom time of some 25 minutes, I surfaced with 28 scallops, just enough for a feed that night without the laborious task of opening the usual large mound. The scallops were plump and all displayed a large bright orange roe, something I had not seen for some years. Whilst this area is not now ideal, let's all hope that it improves in the years to come and once again provides an abundant crop of these delectable delicacies.

Soon afterwards the boat was on the trailer and Robert B., Kate & I headed to Tony's Bar & Grill at Blairgowrie for three of the best pots of beer available on the Mornington Peninsula, if not Melbourne. Tony is a friendly chap indeed, and often rustles up a plate of hot chips for hungry divers. Sure beats the pub in my opinion. Thanks guys for joining me on the day. As for the rest of you, don't be put off by what's stated in the dive calendar if it's not your idyllic dive; it may well be that it will be changed on the day provided consensus dictates.

## WHALE WATCHING WARRNAMBOOL

BY ANDY MASTROWICZ

Well I finally got to see my first live whale in the wild. An awesome and moving sight it was. Even though my first glimpse was from the observation deck at Logan's Beach located not five minutes from the town centre. "Wilma" as this 45 foot Southern Right Whale is called by the locals had four weeks ago given birth to a five metre calf and now could be seen cavorting just beyond the breaker line not five hundred metres away.

For a number of years now I have been dreaming of the day that I would be on the water with one of these gentle giants. It was with silent envy (and regret on pulling the pin that day) that I listened to and read the stories told by VSAGers who were lucky enough to experience the whale sightings of Flinders a couple of years ago.

It was early in June that news reports and pictures appeared in the daily papers that a number of whales had returned to Warrnambool's now famous Logan's beach to calve. I decided I would not miss out again and so organised a weekend trip down to Warrnambool.

Looking back at the records I found that it was nearly 14 years since the club had dived and or visited the famous historic Port City 250 kms west of Melbourne.

When put to the committee and club members at the last meeting I was delighted at the response and by the time the "getaway weekend" neared we had filled 9 cabins at the Fig Tree Caravan Park with a total of 35 VSAGers. This included boat owners Mick, John, Peter, Jim and myself. This was going to be a great weekend as long as the weather kept up its end of the bargain and gave us something similar to the previous 3 weekends on the water.

By Thursday the weather had deteriorated with rain and 20 knot South Westerlies forecast for the weekend. This however only deterred Leo from coming down although he did say he had work commitments and the majority were coming down for a de-stressing weekend anyway.



Most VSAGers including Gail and myself got away from Melbourne around midday. After a relaxed 3 hr drive down the Princess Hwy through the odd rain shower we arrived at the Fig Tree around 3:30pm. This gave us time to check in and then take a quick drive out to Logan's Beach for our look at these monsters from the Antarctic. Unfortunately the South Westerly had made a mess of the ocean and not much was seen amid the whitecaps.

By the time we got back to the Fig Tree everybody except the Jeacles had arrived and were relaxing as only VSAGers know how!! When Mick finally arrived at the park, the story goes that he had to stop at every town on the way just to get out and give his ears a rest from the unrelenting flow of quips that only our Ted could spew forth. Especially as I heard it was also a dry trip.

Well the night wore on and every one got into their own de-stressing tonic or whatever - Mick and Ted into their six pack, Annie into a whisky, Martin into some red wine and tango music, Helen and her entourage polished of a large strudel for desert, Murray-we all know what he does for de-stressing. John lawler and the Vluegels hit the local restaurants while the Mastrowicz's and crew decided on the steakhouse down the road. By 11:00 o'clock most were in bed asleep or so we thought.

We were woken around 4:30 am by some crashing and banging from one of the cabins, and after looking out through the window saw nothing untoward going on went back to sleep. However the next morning we found out the one of our contingent had got himself so de-stressed that he had relaxed an arm through a window followed by a foot and an elbow through a wall (riddle of the noises at 4:30am solved) - now that's what I called relaxed because he went back to sleep with what he thought were only minor abrasions. The down side to this story is that he spent the next day at the local hospital having microsurgery for a severed tendon in his wrist. Unfortunately this will put him out of action for six weeks and we all wish him a speedy and full recovery.

An early morning rise saw me once heading of to Logan's Beach to see if I could get glimpse of mama and baby. The seas were still pretty rough and the 2.5m swell made it difficult to spot anything. If it wasn't for a local who had made himself the custodian and who kept a close watch over the comings and going of

these seafaring giants I would have missed sighting them again.

Once pointed out I had no trouble keeping them in sight and spent the next half-hour peering through binoculars as the pair played just beyond the breakers. It was a wonderful sight and one can only wonder what it was like back in the early 1800s when there were more whales than people along the Victorian Coast.

These gentle giants were hunted to near extinction within ten years by the hundreds of Sealer & Whalers who work the coast from Portland to Eden in row boats all of 20 foot long. Hence the name Right Whale because it was the right whale to kill. As these whales only calve every two years their population increase has been a slow process, however the reports of greater numbers appearing each year is good news and encounters outside the heads might not be a rarity.

The swells were too big to launch boats so everybody made do with the watching from the beach landing with the hope that the seas would calm down enough to go out the next day. I went back to the outlook several times on Saturday and was amazed at the constant flow of tourists. I would say that the whales have given Warrnambool an incredible economic boost in tourism and the town certainly looks much busier than I remember from last visit, even to having a 24 hr 7 day a week Coles supermarket.

The rest of Saturday was spent looking at other sights around Warrnambool such as the Flagstaff Maritime Museum, This place is one of the best historical museums I've to with the highlight being the porcelain Peacock from the wreck of the Lochard, a must for anyone to see. The Tower Hill reserve and Port Fairy township was also visited by some VSAGers. Gail and Jose Taliana spent the afternoon making fresh ravioli, while Martin and Ted entertained them with stories and antics (was that really a lump of pasta Martin was flashing around as Gail took the photo?).

While one of our party was recuperating in the children's ward at the local hospital the rest moved to the Taliana Cabin feasted on 10 dozen of the best homemade ravioli and pasta sauce I've tasted in a long time. Even the big carrot was impressed and asked for the recipe. This was washed down with several 1.5 ltr bottles of imported red wine and then followed by delicious profiteroles. The

evening was spent laughing at Martins stories and his expressive exuberance in telling them.

Early Sunday morning saw me heading off to check on the whales and the state of the seas. With the temperature hovering around 7C, and the wind had swung round to the North, it looked calm enough to launch. Without the whitecaps of the previous day both mother and baby were clearly visible as they rolled, spouted and generally played about 100 metres offshore and I was looking forward to being on the water with them.

Back at the caravan park everybody was soon packed up and after being allocated to a boat headed down to the harbour. As is the case the ocean always looks different at sea level and the wind had shifted to the North West and getting stronger. The enthusiasm of earlier had waned as we watched the 2-3mtr swells (which at any other time would not have deterred VSAG) roll in towards the Beach.

Seeing the whales from the boat was not going to happen this time as consensus was reached against launching. We will do this trip again next year I can assure you.

Thanks go to all those that made the trip as enjoyable and de-stressing as it was and special thanks to John, Mick and Peter for towing their boats all that way and then not getting them wet. (At least you didn't have to wash them when you got home).

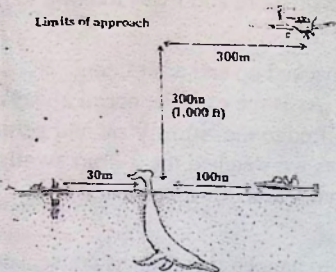


# WHALE WATCHING IN VICTORIA



The basic requirements of the regulations may be depicted as follows:

Limits of approach



(Diagram courtesy of Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service)

## PLEASE REMEMBER

If whales become disturbed, anyone whale watching in the vicinity should move away. When disturbed, whales may display unusual behaviour such as prolonged diving, sudden changes of speed or direction, or in some instances, interruption of breeding or nursing activities. In this situation, accidents may occur, especially if mothers and calves are separated. Active whales require considerable sea-room, and people watching whales must be aware of this need.

Should a whale approach closer than the prescribed distances, whale watchers should attempt to move away. If in a vessel, people should slowly move away using as direct a route as possible. If a whale comes within 50m of a boat, the motor should be placed in neutral and the propellers should not be engaged.

Wherever possible, vessels should approach whales from a direction parallel to the path of the whale and to the rear of, but not directly behind, the whale or group of whales. Head-on approaches

may disturb whales and should be avoided. When stopping to observe whales, allow the engine to idle for a short time before turning it off. Whales may be alarmed by the sudden stopping or starting of noise. No more than three vessels should attempt to watch a whale or group of whales at any one time. This is to avoid the possibility of confining whales inadvertently.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

The informative DCE booklet "Whales in Victorian Waters" also contains a useful bibliography. Publications, further information on whale watching in Victorian waters and the Whale Watching regulations may be obtained from the following offices of the Department of Conservation and Environment.

Sales & Information Centre 240 Victoria Parade EAST MELBOURNE 3002 Tel: 03 412 4795	Dandenong Region 265 Thomas Street DANDENONG VIC 3175 Tel: 03 705 7000
Orbost Region 52 Stanley Street ORBOST VIC 3888 Tel: 051 54 6222	Melbourne Region 49 Spring Street MELBOURNE VIC 3000 Tel: 03 651 3038
Bairnsdale Region 210 Main Street BAIRNSDALE VIC 3875 Tel: 051 52 6211	Geelong Region Fenwick Street GEELONG VIC 3220 Tel: 052 26 4667
Central Gippsland 71 Hotham Street TRARALGON VIC 3844 Tel: 051 74 6166	Colac Region 83 Gellibrand Street COLAC VIC 3250 Tel: 052 33 5533
Yarram Region 310 Commercial Road YARRAM VIC 3971 Tel: 051 52 5155	Portland Region 8-12 Julia Street PORTLAND VIC 3305 Tel: 053 23 3232



Conservation &  
Environment

# VANUATU

## PRESIDENT COOLIDGE

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ABSENCE. YOU CAN DIVE ON .....

THE PRESIDENT COOLIDGE

MILLION DOLLAR POINT

USS TUCKER

HENRY BONNEAUD

TUBANA POINT

SHARK FEED

MAY 2000

1 WEEK ONLY

DEPOSITS PAYABLE AT NOVEMBER MEETING

## ***PROPOSED FISHERIES REGULATIONS***

There are some proposed changes to the recreational catches for abalone and southern rock lobster. Whilst the new regulations have yet to be confirmed, the changes are likely to be as follows.

The current bag limit on abalone will remain as is. Abalone must not be taken at night. A blunt instrument must be used to take abalone. a car/boat limit of 50 abalone will apply. Abalone, when caught, must be cut across the foot to identify the catch as recreational. A recreational fishing licence must be held to take abalone.

The current catch for rock lobster will reduce from 4 to 2 per person per day, with a professional limit of 4 per person. The crayfish must be tail clipped or tail-punched

It is expected that these regulations will come into force in the next few weeks.

The department of natural resources and environment has a web site <http://www.nre.vic.gov.au/fishing/index.htm>.

JOHN LAWLER  
VSAG DELEGATE TO THE SDFV



## COMPUTERS

A language instructor was explaining to her class that French nouns, unlike their English counterparts, are grammatically designated as masculine or feminine.

Things like 'chalk' or 'pencil' she described, would have a gender association although in English these words were neutral.

Puzzled, one student raised his hand and asked "What gender is a computer?" The teacher wasn't certain which it was, and so she divided the class into two groups and asked them to decide if a computer should be masculine or feminine.

One group was composed of the women in the class, and the other, of men. Both groups were asked to give four reasons for their recommendation. The group of women concluded that computers should be referred to in the masculine gender because:

1. In order to get their attention, you have to turn them on.
2. They have a lot of data but are still clueless.
3. They are supposed to help you solve your problems, but half the time they ARE the problem.
4. As soon as you commit to one, you realise that if you had waited a little longer, you could have had a better model.

The men, on the other hand, decided that computers should definitely be referred to in the feminine gender because:

1. No one but their creator understands their internal logic.
2. The native language they use to communicate with other computers is incomprehensible to everyone else.
3. Even your smallest mistakes are stored in long-term memory for later retrieval.
4. As soon as you make a commitment to one, you find yourself spending half your pay packet on accessories for it.

# Bay searchers plan to solve Coramba mystery

A FORMER Hastings police detective is turning his sleuth skills to solving the 66 year mystery of a Western Port shipwreck.

Peter Ritchie, now a civvy and skipper of the charter boat *Kooga*, has prepared a team which wants to find the TSS *Coramba's* watery grave and piece together how it came to grief one stormy night in 1934.

Mr Ritchie will have on board another former policeman, Gary Donnellan who was 15 years a police Search and Rescue Sergeant.

Nearly 66 years ago TSS *Coramba* left Warnambool loaded with 10,551 cases of Nestle condensed milk, lactogen and wool.

She had a crew of 17, of which 10 were married men, on a regular Portland-Melbourne trade route.

A severe storm prevented her entering the Rip into Port Phillip Bay. It's believed she ran on seeking shelter in Western Port.

But somewhere off the coast of Phillip Island she sank on the night of November 30, 1934.

All hands were lost, and only three bodies later recovered.

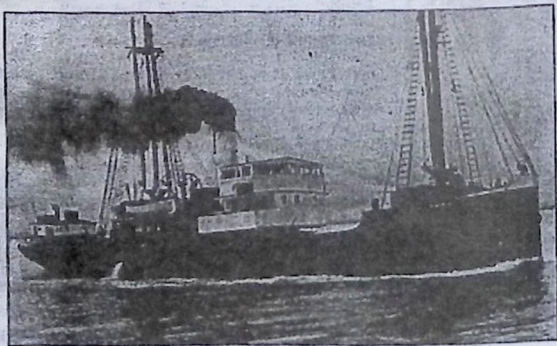
"Attempts have been made in the past to locate the vessel. A book has been written. Marine Board Inquiry notes have been obtained, 'guesstimations' have been made to her location. Witnesses have been re-interviewed, all to no avail," said Mr Ritchie.

A few years ago she was apparently located by a fishing vessel which hooked her with its anchor. Its location was logged, but not confirmed.

With sophisticated electron-

SKIPPER Peter Ritchie aboard search vessel *Kooga*.

The ill-fated steamer *Coramba*, 530 tons gross, built in Ayr, Scotland in 1911.



*Coramba mystery cont:*

ics and a brand new dive vessel - *Kooga* - Mr Ritchie believes finding the *Coramba* is now possible.

In his 1984 book "*Coramba, The Ship the Sea Swallowed*"

Desmond Williams wrote: "A clue to her disappearance may be obtained only when the hull is studied by divers. As more modern diving gear is now available, a visit to the grave of the *Coramba* may very soon be possible".

Mr Williams is also part of the search crew and bring 18 years' research to the effort.

The team plans to charter *Kooga*, a stable dive boat berthed at Western Port Marina in Hastings, for five days.

The first two days they will use side scan sonar and a magnetometer, which they hope will find the *Coramba*, after which they will dive to the site and log the vessel using underwater video.

A side scan sonar is capable of detecting objects on the seabed within a 200 metres wide scanning area. The magnetometer is used to detect higher levels of metal on the seabed.

The searchers have three suspected sites from which to start.

These were obtained from the Maritime Heritage Unit, reckoning by author Des Williams from notes and witnesses and a third site supplied from a fishing boat.

The vessel is protected under law, and no salvage will be conducted. "It is hoped that at a future date a commemorative plaque will be attached to the vessel".

The total expected cost of the operation is expected to be just \$7400, and the searchers are inviting sponsorship.

If you think you can help, or for details of the mission, call Peter Ritchie on 0417 590 553.



# Stars of the sea are wreaking havoc in our waters, writes Geoff Strong

Call it another unexpected spin-off of globalisation. Just as our industries disappear off-shore due to foreign trade, those same forces sometimes bring things the other way: *Asterias amurensis*, for example.

Squeezing out the locals, it has moved into our territory and established itself under our noses. Now there is a crisis and nobody really knows what to do.

Commonly called the North Pacific seastar, it was unknown in Victorian waters four years ago. Last year 150 were found in Port Phillip Bay. This year the estimated bay population is 12 million.

It is just the latest of an estimated 170 exotics that scientists have found in our bay, most of which have hitched a ride on ships, either in ballast tanks or attached to hulls. Despite concern for about a decade and a 1997 state parliamentary report highlighting a litany of marine environmental disasters overseas that had been brought about by introduced organisms, the seastar got here.

Until now, the most serious threat in the bay has been the Sabella tube worm from Europe, which has colonised large areas of the seabed.

But scientists at the State Government's Marine and Freshwater Research Institute at Queenscliff believe the worm's spread might have stabilised and appears to have provided a habitat for at least one species of native fish.

Some introduced pests have been here a long time, such as the green European shore crab *Carcinus maenus*, first recorded in the bay in 1856. It is believed to be the first introduced marine species and it arrived after surviving months at sea in the hull of a sailing ship. It's a greedy predator, but it is not considered a threat to fisheries.

Not so the seastar, which has the capacity to demolish our shellfish farming industry, as it has already done in parts of Tasmania. Originally from Japan and eastern Russia, it is believed to have arrived in Australia 20 years ago, becoming

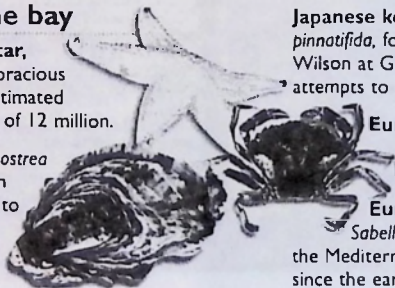
## Beasties in the bay

### North Pacific seastar,

*Asterias amurensis*, voracious feeder on shellfish. Estimated population in the bay of 12 million.

### Pacific oyster, *Crassostrea*

*gigas*, escaped after an unsuccessful attempt to establish an oyster industry.



Japanese kelp, *Undaria pinnatifida*, found near Point Wilson at Geelong. Continuous attempts to eradicate it.



European shore crab, *Carcinus maenus*, possibly the first introduced species. Detected in 1856.

European fan worm, *Sabella spallanzanii*, from the Mediterranean. Spread rapidly since the early 1990s.



**Cause for concern: The North Pacific seastar at the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute at Queenscliff.**



established in the estuary of the Derwent River around Hobart, where its population is now believed to be 30 million.

Like many seastars, or starfish as they are commonly called, it eats almost anything, particularly bivalve shellfish such as mussels, oysters and scallops. But it also likes dead things on the bottom. There are reports that they have been seen munching into the corpse of a dog.

At the Queenscliff Institute, researcher Leanne Gunthorpe plucks one of the North Pacific seastars out of a large plastic tank where they are being kept for study. At the centre of its radial body, its stomach can be seen distended like the clear yellow latex of a surgical rubber glove.

This is how many stars consume their prey, by bringing it into contact with their stomachs and absorbing it directly.

"These beasts are voracious feeders and each female can produce 20 million eggs in a season," Dr Gunthorpe said. "As far as we

know there is nothing munching on them to keep their numbers down. When you get something new like this, local predators don't touch them because they aren't used to them."

"One of the theories why they multiplied so much in the Derwent was because it is considered a degraded environment and it was thought they had moved in a bit like a weed does on land.

"But we have found them in the middle of the bay here and that is not a degraded environment, so we don't know."

Science is also at a loss over how to control them. The search is on for a native organism that might find them tasty or a parasite from their native environment that might help keep numbers down, but in the long term they are pinning their hopes on a genetically engineered solution.

The CSIRO's Dr Dick Martin said he believed a lethal gene could be introduced to the seastar's population.

**DIVE/SOCIAL CALENDAR**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>EVENT/LOCATION</b>	<b>DIVE CAPTAIN</b>	<b>MEET AT</b>
19 August	General Meeting Bell's Hotel Cnr. Moray & Coventry Streets, Sth. Melbourne		8.00 pm
22 Aug	Nepean Wall (1 Tank)	Don Abell 9889 4415	Sorrento 10.30am
28 Aug	Hurricane	Leo Maybus 9727 1568/0418 375 102	Rye
3-4 Sept	Snow trip - Hotham	Leo Maybus 9727 1568/0418 375 102	
5 Sept	Fathers Day lunch	Gerry Devries 9725 2381/0417 324 608	
16 Sept	Annual General Meeting Bell's Hotel Cnr. Moray & Coventry Streets, Sth. Melbourne		8.00 pm
19 Sept	George Kermode	John Mills 9761 0960	Newhaven 10.00am
26 Sept	Yarra Valley Wine Tour	Helen Fryday 9417 7513	
21 Oct	General Meeting Bell's Hotel Cnr. Moray & Coventry Streets, Sth. Melbourne		8.00 pm
Xmas'99	Robe	Priya Cardinalletti	
May '00	Vanuatu	Don Abell	
Xmas '00	Tasmania	Mick Jeacle	

**NOTICE:** BOAT OWNERS INTENDING TO BRING THEIR BOATS PLEASE RING THE DIVE CAPTAIN BEFORE 6.00 PM ON EVENING PRIOR TO THE DIVE.

DIVERS PLEASE RING BETWEEN 6.00 PM - 7.00 PM.

FOR NIGHT DIVES (USUALLY SATURDAYS) PLEASE RING BY 8.00 PM ON EVENING PRIOR TO DIVE.

GREAT DIVE? NO DIVE SCHEDULED?  
RING NEVILLE VIAPREE - 9551 1547 (H)







## TIDE TABLES

**TIMES OF FLOOD AND EBB** - The tables of Times of Flood and Ebb give the times when the rate of change in the sea level at Point Lonsdale (Port Phillip Heads) is a maximum. Each time approximately time when the tidal flow at the entrance to port Phillip by changes direction, this time is given in the column marked "Time". The direction of this flow is indicated by the words "flood" and "ebb" in the column "start". Thus the word "flood" indicates that the tide starts to flow into the bay, at the given time in the "Time" column. The word "ebb" indicates that the tide starts to flow out of the bay at that time.

## PORT PHILLIP HEADS (PT. LONSDALE)

LAT 38° 18'

LONG 144° 37'

LAT 38° 18'

LONG 144° 37'

TIME ZONE -1000

TIMES AND HEIGHTS OF HIGH AND LOW WATERS

NOVEMBER - 1999

Time m	Time m	Time m	Time m	Time m	Time Start	Time Start	Time Start	Time Start	Time Start
1 0519 1.52	0046 1.43	0531 1.36	0101 1.60	0111 flood	9 0341 ebb	0115 flood	0402 ebb	0402 ebb	
1 1046 0.44	0826 0.54	1114 0.50	0830 0.55	0807 ebb	9 0944 flood	0812 ebb	25 1001 flood	25 1001 flood	
MO 1705 1.33	1234 1.28	WE 1730 1.15	TH 12*9 1.36	MO 1342 flood	TU 1456 ebb	WE 1918 ebb	TH 1448 ebb	TH 1448 ebb	
2305 0.18	1834 0.22	2309 0.33	1839 0.02	1912 ebb	2130 flood		2146 flood	2146 flood	
2 0612 1.43	0130 1.49	0614 1.31	0153 1.67	0159 flood	10 0422 ebb	0148 flood	26 0452 ebb	26 0452 ebb	
2 1135 0.46	0707 0.51	1151 0.51	0722 1.50	0851 ebb	10 1019 flood	0847 ebb	26 1043 flood	26 1043 flood	
TU 1801 1.26	WE 1313 1.29	TH 1819 1.12	FR 1340 1.40	TU 1435 flood	WE 2200 flood	TH 2012 ebb	FR 1541 ebb	FR 1541 ebb	
2355 0.28	1912 0.18	2350 0.40	1931 -0.02	2008 ebb			2234 flood	2234 flood	
3 0709 1.35	0206 1.53	0700 1.26	0243 1.70	0247 flood	11 0458 ebb	0227 flood	27 0539 ebb	27 0539 ebb	
3 1230 0.49	0744 0.49	1235 0.50	0811 0.46	0938 ebb	11 1051 flood	0926 ebb	27 1122 flood	27 1122 flood	
WE 1913 1.19	TH 1347 1.31	FR 1920 1.10	SA 1428 1.42	WE 1543 flood	TH 1604 ebb	FR 1546 flood	SA 1633 ebb	SA 1633 ebb	
			2022 -0.01	2115 ebb	2233 flood	-2126 ebb	SA 2321 flood	SA 2321 flood	
4 0050 0.40	0239 1.54	0043 0.48	0031 1.68	0331 flood	12 0531 ebb	0316 flood	28 0624 ebb	28 0624 ebb	
4 0809 1.28	0818 0.47	0754 1.22	0859 0.42	1030 ebb	12 1122 flood	1011 ebb	28 1205 flood	28 1205 flood	
TH 1334 0.51	FR 1422 1.31	SA 1330 0.48	SU 1515 1.41	TH 1717 flood	FR 1633 ebb	SA 2301 ebb	SU 1725 ebb	SU 1725 ebb	
2035 1.17	2024 0.16	2035 1.13	SU 2112 0.03	2245 ebb	2305 flood				
5 0156 0.50	0310 1.53	0145 0.56	0418 1.62	0455 flood	13 0603 ebb	0431 flood	29 0009 flood	29 0009 flood	
5 0909 1.24	0853 0.46	0854 1.21	0947 0.40	1129 ebb	13 1151 flood	1102 ebb	29 0707 ebb	29 0707 ebb	
FR 1451 0.49	SU 1457 1.30	SU 1433 0.42	MO 1604 1.38	FR 1844 flood	SA 1704 ebb	SU 1816 flood	MO 1252 flood	MO 1252 flood	
2149 1.19	2059 0.17	2154 1.22	2201 0.11		SA 2338 flood		MO 1817 ebb	MO 1817 ebb	
6 0313 0.56	0343 1.51	0302 0.61	0506 1.55	0506 ebb	14 0634 ebb	0039 ebb	30 0054 flood	30 0054 flood	
6 1007 1.23	0929 0.46	0927 1.22	1036 0.39	0627 flood	14 1127 flood	0617 flood	30 0747 ebb	30 0747 ebb	
SA 1603 0.44	SU 1532 1.28	MO 1542 0.33	TU 1657 1.32	SA 1230 ebb	SU 1730 ebb	MO 1200 ebb	TU 1344 flood	TU 1344 flood	
2257 1.26	2131 0.19	2304 1.34	2250 0.21	1943 flood		1915 flood			
7 0430 0.58	0415 1.47	0422 0.62			15 0011 flood	0201 ebb			
7 1102 1.24	1053 1.25	1058 1.25			15 0706 ebb	0805 flood			
SU 1703 0.36	MO 1610 1.24	TU 1647 0.22			MO 1300 flood	TU 2008 flood			
2357 1.34	MO 2203 0.23				MO 1802 ebb				
8 0534 0.56	0453 1.42	0006 1.48			16 0043 flood	0307 ebb			
8 1151 1.26	1039 0.46	1033 0.59			16 0738 ebb	0738 ebb			
MO 1752 0.29	TU 1647 1.19	WE 1745 1.31			MO 1335 flood	1354 ebb			
	2234 0.28				TU 1837 ebb	2058 flood			

TIMES OF SLACK WATERS

NOVEMBER - 1999



## EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION MORNINGTON PENINSULA AREA

	PHONE
POLICE - AMBULANCE - FIRE	(000)
PENINSULA AMBULANCE (ROSEBUD, SORRENTO) (MORNINGTON)	(008) 137333 (03) 9783 2222
SOUTHERN PENINSULA HOSPITAL 1527 NEPEAN ROSEBUD	(0359) 86 8444
FRANKSTON HOSPITAL HASTINGS ROAD FRANKSTON	(03) 9781 3111
MORNINGTON BUSH NURSING HOSPITAL MAIN ST MORNINGTON	(0359) 75 2009
MORNINGTON BAY RESCUE SERVICE	(0359) 75 2733
SOUTHERN PENINSULA RESCUE	(0359) 84 2000
DIVING EMERGENCY SERVICE	1800 088 200
COAST GUARD	(03) 9598 7003
STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE (S.E.S)	(03) 26 1468
WATER POLICE	(03) 9662 0911
MELBOURNE AMBULANCE	(03) 9662 2533
DOCTORS DIVING MEDICINE	
DR. GUY WILLIAMS	ROSEBUD (0359) 81 1555
DR. J De B.J. DADE	MORNINGTON (0359) 75 5288
DIVING EMERGENCY SERVICE	1800 088 200

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