

# FATHOMS

EST. 1954



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# VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

FEB-MAR 99

# FATHOMS

Official journal of the *Victorian Sub - Aqua Group*

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South Melbourne - 8pm sharp!  
Thursday 18th February 1999  
Thursday 18th March 1999

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## EDITORIAL

Herewith your first Fathoms for the new year. Although that is not entirely correct as the last edition was held up in production due to circumstances beyond our control. For those of you not at the January meeting a happy new year from the Committee and all your fellow members at VSAG.

Diving through the month of January ,plus the Christmas trip to Bermagui has been an big success. It seems that we have launched on every dive and the conditions both above and under the water have impressed those who have made the most of it. Isn't it great to be able to plan a dive and dive as planned.

The activities have brought some top articles for this month's magazine. Thanks to Josie, Gail, Peter, and Mick. For those that think this is Gail's first article for Fathoms you are wrong. Gail tells the Editor that she has contributed under a "pen" name on many previous occasions. So you can pick her out in future she uses the name "Andy".

Then of course there are the two articles from Josie . For the first time I have had to deal with the dilemma of just how far we should go in the "freedom of the press". I know how Mick must have of felt when THAT article was received last year. You will see that Josie's articles have continued on a theme. Far be it for me to challenge her claim that these works are purely fiction. If they are then it is a pity because the research work would be first rate.

I did approach Josie and ask whether she thought that I should release future editions of the magazine in a sealed plastic wrapper. She has assured me that the wrapper will not be necessary until she includes the photos to accompany the article. I am now considering whether the price of your valued Fathoms will need to rise with everything else when those snaps are published.

As they say in the classics " don't touch your dial and stay tuned".



Here begins a new role for me that I am really looking forward to. For my 19 years in the Club Fathoms has been the literary bonding that allows all members to be a part of the action even when they are not able to attend all the scheduled functions. I have never underestimated the importance of the magazine in making this club what it is after 44 years.

Despite what some may think, this is a position in VSAG that I have wanted to do but have avoided due to time commitments. Three years ago I was only just beaten to the editorship by a very keen Mick Jeacle. I reluctantly capitulated so that Mick had a chance to lift and consolidate his profile in the club and help a few people get to know him.

There has been a rumour that there was a great groundswell from the membership for me to get in and fix the magazine after 3 years of neglect. I actually started the rumour and it hasn't really caught on. The real fact is that all editors that preceded me have set such high standards that it is hard for any member to aspire to even maintain the standard. I hope all members will continue to support the magazine and me with their articles, photos, clippings or anecdotes.

Of course there are already some positive signs that will not have gone unnoticed by astute VSAG members. Only a few days after the puff of white smoke rose from the holy window to signify my elevation to high office, Rupert and young Lachlan dropped into town unexpectedly and I am now anticipating an invite to play polo with Kerry in the near future.

Thanks to those who have supported this issue. Both JL and Darren Pearce have written about Tidal River over the Cup weekend. I was pleased to read Darren's article of someone who has dived The Prom for the first time. It was the same for me probably all of us - and the feeling doesn't ever go away. It is a magic place.

Thanks to Tony for Tip's Tit-Bits. Tony shows all the signs of the great talent that was handed down from father to son by the old E.W. himself.

I have also published the Club's Financial Statements for all members to read and you will see that we have a loaded calendar of diving ahead of us.

I look forward to your support for the magazine to keep up the good tradition.

*Editor - Don Abell.*

## ***CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY 1998***

BY GAIL MASTROWICZ

Whilst laying back relaxing one day after a dive and "post-morteming" said dive, Gerry came over and announced that seeing we had such a good time, that he expected me to write up an article for "Fathoms", which I agreed to do. Rather than write an essay, I decided to share my diary entries (edited version only) with you for the time that we spent in Bermagui with VSAG - Hope you enjoy  
**Monday 28 December 1998**

It was decided to dive Montague Island and Peter and Andy launched the boats at Bermagui and we made our way up to Montague Island which was approximately 22 Kms away. On board our boat were Andy, Gail, Nicole, Joe and Darren. When we arrived the seas were rather calm and we all kitted up and Andy, Joe, Darren and I dived together. We dived just off Pebble Beach and went to 24 metres. Saw lots of schools of fish and sea-life. As soon as we hit the bottom we saw a 6 foot Grey Nurse Shark glide past, followed closely by Josie and Margot. Saw lots of Southern Green Eels and we enticed them out of their hiding places in the rocks by feeding them sea anemones. Fed the large Blue Groper and he followed us around for all of our dive.

**Tuesday 29 December '98**

We drove up to Narooma and launched there and went to Montague Island (approx 9 Kms). Andy, Gail, Nicole, Joe and Ian were on board. On the way to our dive site we saw a colony of seals basking in the sun. Ian, Andy, Joe and I dived the same spot as yesterday and saw the Blue Groper and fed him. We also saw a 6' Wobbiegong asleep under a rock and decided not to wake him up and upset him. After our dive we motored around to another little inlet and fished for Squid, which we caught and Andy cooked up for part of our evening meal (spices kindly donated by Gerry & Andrea).

**Wednesday 30 December '98**

We planned to launch at Bermagui, however before actually leaving the dock we watched a 75 Kg Marlin being dissected and cut up into steaks. We had decided

to do a dive on the East side of the Bermagui beach, however due to the large swell we all voted to go fishing instead. Joe, Nicole, Jim, Doris, Andy and I all geared up to catch fish, however more than one person was a little "green". We caught a dozen flathead which we BBQ'd for the evening meal. On returning to the jetty we went over to the fish cleaning platform and another Marlin came in on a boat (approx 70 Kgs) and we watched the fishermen cutting it up. These fishermen cut off its head and planned to mount it.

### **Thursday 31 December '98**

Lay day for diving. Doris' family paid us a visit from Merimbula and we all went out on the boat to do a spot of fishing off Bermagui. A lovely day was had by all, however we are all getting sick of flathead! Whilst fishing we came across a pod of Dolphins who rode on our bow rail and generally hung around for a little while once we had stopped and anchored. We were also visited by a friendly Seal who came right up to the boat and enjoyed a snack or two of our bait that we threw to him. On returning to the dock another Marlin was brought in (approx. 70 Kgs) and the fishermen were trying to give it away. We brought back to camp a slab of the Marlin which Gerry and Andy and Charlie cooked the next evening and passed around camp so that we all could try the Marlin meat.

As it was New Year's Eve, Andrea & Gerry had arranged for us to have dinner at the Bermagui Country Club and the Club supplied a shuttle bus. We had our evening meal and had a great time and the food and company was great. After dinner we all took to the pokies and some of us won and some of us lost, but all of us had a great time. Took the Shuttle Bus back to camp where we all started to party and see in the New Year in full VSAG fashion. There were fireworks over the lake in the caravan park, and Andy decided to light his old out-of-date flares which "lit up" the immediate area around our camp and caused a riot. Some of us stayed up until the wee hours whilst some went to their beds early. We also had a select few who stayed up all night so as not to disturb those sleeping with their snoring - a very nice gesture.

### **Saturday 2 January 1999**

As most of the VSAG divers had elected to dive with a charter boat operator and

hopefully dive the Lady Darling shipwreck, Andy and Peter decided to take the family over to Montague Island and do one dive and have a look around. We had Andy, Gail, Jim, Doris and Charlie on board and met up with Peter and his family and Marie Truscott at the Narooma boat-ramp and proceeded out through the infamous Narooma Bar and took off for Montague Island through a moderately rough sea. We bumped into our fellow VSAGers at Montague, and Peter, Andy and I went for a dive. It was rather an uneventful dive as we could not find the Pinnacle and it was rather a barren dive, although we did see a huge black Stingray about 6 to 7 feet across. However, even though it was an uneventful dive it was nice to once again get into the water. Peter and crew departed after lunch and we headed over to another bay to fish for Squid and to trawl for the Kingfish. However, as the afternoon wore on, the wind whipped up and the seas became rather rough. Up went the storm covers and we negotiated the waves to make our way back to Narooma. We congratulated ourselves on managing to stay dry under the storm covers on the way back, however it was another story once we finally arrived. One of the interesting features was that whilst the waves rose just slightly above the side of our boat Doris actually saw a shark swimming inside the wave alongside us and this caused a minor panic as everyone wanted to see if they could see it. However, as we came up to the Narooma Bar the waves were washing over the boat and we were being tossed one side to the other and before we knew it we had started the approach to the "Bar". I knew we were in a slight bit of trouble when Jim turned around and yelled "Hang On Tight!!!" The next minute it was like a tunnel of water hitting us full in the face and I was sure we were actually under the water, and when everything cleared and I looked around we all looked like drowned rats and we were standing in knee-deep water at the back of the boat, and even the dive-tanks were floating. However, at that stage we basically were inside the bar and the motor started losing power and sounding a little sick and Charlie was yelling "keep the motor going, don't slow down, keep going" and the back of the boat was only about 12 inches from the top of the water and we were "nose up", however Andy turned on the bilge pumps and kept revving the motor and slowly we regained power and then we were through. The upshot was that the rocket-launcher actually took a wave and was pushed back about a foot - the water came



both over and through the storm covers and actually bent the plates that hold the rocket launcher up - it took 4 strong VSAGers to straighten the steel (photo enclosed) and a big "thanks" to those who helped. Jim was up the front and got a birds eye view of the whole proceedings and he reports that we were correctly surfing in on the back of the wave when the wave was washed away from under us by the outgoing tide and it virtually "disappeared" from under us, and he said the boat went nose down and then straight into the outgoing tide (hence the amount of water over us) and luckily we then surfaced nose up. I also thank Andy for his level-headed way of remaining cool and in control in what was a rather unnerving experience - only for his concentration I think we could have been in a lot more trouble.

As a final point to this experience and a timely reminder, I would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone to never be complacent when going in or out of a Bar and always wear lifejackets as an added safety precaution, and treat Mother Nature with a healthy respect.

### **Sunday 3 January 1999**

As we had such a memorable day yesterday and we were moving on tomorrow, we decided to stay in camp and wash and dry all the bits and pieces of our boat that had been "drowned" in salt water. As it was a day in the 30's everything dried to our satisfaction.

### **Monday 4 to Sunday 17 January 1999**

Along with Jim and Doris, we left Bermagui on the Monday and travelled up the coast to Sydney where we dropped off our boat at a friend's house whilst we continued on with our holiday. We stayed overnight at Newcastle and then on to Surfer's Paradise where we caught up with Kim and her friends and had dinner with them, then on to Brisbane, Tuwantin and Fraser Island, arriving on Fraser early afternoon on Wednesday 6 January.

Our time on Fraser was wonderful and we saw lots of sights and had lots of experiences - we were lucky enough to be able to get up to the Sandy Cape Lighthouse in the far North of the Island, fished off the beach, tried our hands at

catching the “worms” and the “pippis” for fishing, and generally had a wonderful time. We also noted that a lot had changed since our first visit to Fraser a few years back.

Finally we had to depart from Fraser (our time ran out), and we then made our way back to Brisbane and Surfer’s Paradise and caught up with friends and relatives. We then drove down to Sydney where we stopped off at Jenny & Peter’s house to collect our boat, and then on to Sherrie & Glenn’s house in Sydney where we stayed for a couple of days and enjoyed launching the boat at the Yacht Club and motoring around on the wonderful waterways in Sydney.

One of the more memorable experiences whilst in Sydney was that I was lucky enough to be able to join one of the groups swimming with the Sharks, Rays, etc. in the Manly Aquarium, and Andy came along and took a great video film and photos with which to remember the experience. This experience was a real “buzz” and, unfortunately, we were told that the Manly Aquarium has been taken over now by the Council and it looks like they have decided not to continue to run these groups to swim with the sea-life. Whilst in Sydney I also caught my first Shark whilst fishing - and this caused a near riot/panic on our boat with all concerned!

Anyway, to finish up, we had a wonderful holiday and hopefully we will arrange more of these holidays in future as there is a lot to see and do.

## *CORAMBA DIVE REPORT SUN 28th FEBRUARY 1999*

By Des Williams

This turned out to be the CORAMBA dive that never was! The plan had been to search for the wreck of the steamship CORAMBA off Phillip Island, but with the combination of difficulty launching at Flinders and the non-agreement on which alternative ramp to use, I re-scheduled this dive from Sorrento and left the CORAMBA search for another day.

Learning that the slack flood tide was to be at 11.30 AM, I decided meet at Sorrento at 9.00AM. Member boats were: M. Jeacle, P.Vleugel, J.Lawler and B. Truscott. Extra divers were myself, Bill Hayes, Ted Cornish, Darren Pearce, John Ashley and P. Reynolds. Too many boats and not enough divers, but Barry wanted to give his boat a run before the trip to Refuge the next weekend, so there was plenty of room for divers.

The weather was one of those "out of the box" days with an oily sea, sunshine and a whiff of easterley wind. As the day had been planned for a new dive (namely the CORAMBA) we thought we would continue in the same vane. Outside the Heads we slipped over an oily calm on track for the wreck of the HYGEIA, following Mick's G.P.S. We had never been to this wrecksite before. Once on site, we discovered she lies in about 58M of water, so I think I had better brush up on my information before we try that one again! I do know friends who have dived the remains, but I did not think she was so deep.

No time to lose as the tide slowed down. We moved about a kilometer away to the COURIER wreck, where Mick dropped his shot line spot-on the first time! We all geared up quickly in the beautiful morning sunshine, Peter Vleugel and I being first in the water. We followed Mick's anchor line down, down, down

through the dark water until the sand came into view some 12M from the bottom, looked promising! Then striking out beyond the anchor, we very quickly caught sight of the bulk of the complete bow section in front of us and swam to the port railing to steady and check gauges. Visibility was about 25M as we could see one third of the length of the ship, her boilers looming aft of the separated bow section. This was going to be a GOOD ONE!

I have dived the COURIER before, but always in poor viz, so I was very excited to at last have a good look at this very famous bay passenger steamer, as a complete entity. We swam down the port side aft passing the two large in-line boilers, and on until we arrived at the stern section. I very much like diving with Peter, as he is always right with me and we were able to share the scene below us, he is also a very cool diver, which I find very steadying at such depths. We were at 40M.

At the stern, I peered over the port railing and was amazed to see her special sluice-keel still visible. This was a distinguishing feature of the COURIER, as it was a new innovation when she was built back in 1887, the idea being that the window in the aft section of her keel ensured the free flow of water to the propeller. The down side of this new design was that it did not check any tendency to roll.

By now, Peter was inside the stern section and I followed, as we had planned to look for the compass-rose design which is supposed to be formed by the mosaic tiles on the deck. We had no luck with this feature and no time to mess about combing the wreck for it. Inside the stern my mind cast back to a passage in one of Jack Loney's books, which described this once beautiful section of the ship. It was here in the drawing room saloon, which was twenty metres long and the full width of the ship, that the mosaic tiled floor was complimented by a marble dado, all around the room and a frieze of oak dignified with carvings. The seats were formed into bays upholstered in navy blue velvet, whilst the sides were lighted with large, square, bevelled, plate-glass windows, sliding venetian shutters admitted air whilst excluding the hot summer sun. Below us, was where

the dining saloon of the same dimensions was situated, where tables could be arranged to seat 200 people comfortably.

We then swam back along the starboard side, passing the boilers as other V.S.A.Gers approached us from the bow. We dropped down to enter the bow through two large doorways and took in the view of the light streaming in through the port-holes from the sun far above us. It was time to leave, and we passed through the remains of the teak deck and out into open water for a last glimpse at the vertical stem post and bow section. We scaled the anchor rope to decompress and left the water just as John Lawler was staging.

A top dive! This was a great end to the Summer dive season. My first dive with V.S.A.G mates for many months and I am damn sure I will be on some more dives very soon. if this is any indication of what the Autumn dive season will be all about. The time was now just after 11 AM and the slack flood was due at 11.30AM, so we sped over to Point Nepean to try and drop in on the wreck of the TIME which is in only 9M of water, the perfect decompression 2nd dive. The water was like gin, as Peter and I dropped back in at about noon. The tide had stopped and there was a procession of huge cargo ships leaving the bay not far away, but we were not in their way at the TIME site.

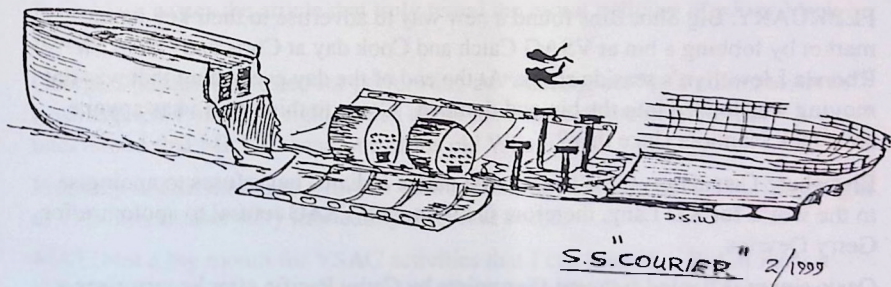
We missed the TIME wreck, but spent 30 minutes swimming through some of the most beautiful scenery, with long strands of kelp reaching vertically to the surface and schools of fish following us around. We were accompanied by pike, leather jackets, old wife, boarfish and sweep. Pat kept the boat near us at all times, so we felt safe in this otherwise tide swept shallow section of the Mornington Peninsula. Some more exploratory dives in this area could be very interesting indeed.

Following this dive, John Lawler and Darren Pearce had time to fit in a good dive on the lower end of Spectacular Reef, whilst Mick Jeacle, Bill Hayes and Barry Truscott enjoyed the clear waters on the Queenscliff side of the channel. Mick said he saw a large cray, but was distracted and swam off forgetting the red spider! On his own admission, he thinks he may be getting too old!!! I would

have to agree there, as I can't imagine Mick intentionally leaving a cray for another diver.

Following these dives, we travelled at high speed to Sorrento to be back on the trailers at 3PM. My thanks go to all who attended and especially the boys who brought their boats out and Mick for skill with the GPS and marks. No thanks goes to those members and non-members who stuffed me around the night before, when I was trying to organise the dive.

This was one of those very special V.S.A.G dive days to remember for a very long time, especially as the Winter closes in. I have attached a sketch of how I found the wreck, which in the clear conditions, was much easier to form in my mind. Maybe we will find the tiled section next time!



## *1998 THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS*

BY DON ABELL

As this is officially the first Club magazine for 1999 I thought it would be good to prepare a handy summary of the year just past .

**JANUARY:** In a similar expedition to that of Scott of the Antarctic , our own Scott of Frankston (now moved to Dingley to escape the competition of the Home Brewers Glee Club) led his own expedition South .Upon hearing that the South Pole is not fully licenced he wisely stopped the group at King Island and immersed them all in the friendly waters of Bass Strait .

Messers Luxford and Abell made it a little further south and dived Bicheno . After 4 dives they were tired of the sight of crayfish so they retired to Hobart for a few quiet drinks . Two of the ladies at the Hobart Cup showed the ultimate good judgement by asking our 2 VSAG members to take part in the Fashions on the Field competition . The 2 VSAG members showed the ultimate good judgement by declining .

**FEBRUARY:** Big Shot Bins found a new way to advertise to their key target market by lobbing a bin at VSAG Catch and Cook day at Chris and "Help Me " Rhonda Llewellyn's seaside shack. At the end of the day everything that was not moving was loaded into the bin and dumped . Come to think of it ; has anyone seen Jack Namiota since then?

Elsewhere Canada says it is sorry to the native Indians, but refuses to apologise to the world for KD Lang, therefore justifying the VSAG refusal to apologise for Gerry Devries.

Oasis singer is denied frequent flier points by Cathy Pacific after he terrorises a flight from Hong Kong to Perth. He refers to previous flights of VSAG member Justin Liddy in his summary of defence.

**MARCH:** The Across the Bay Challenge is postponed yet again . VSAG official Leo Maybus explained that he needed additional time to calculate the effect on

speed and consequent air consumption of having an axe imbedded in his scooter.

Des Williams did not have similar problems and so successfully tested out his divers helmet in real underwater conditions .

Just across the Tasman , power was restored to Auckland but life will still be a while yet .

When Alzheimer's wonder drug Donepezil is rejected for the pharmaceutical subsidy scheme , an Alzheimer's Association spokesman declares: "The effect of this stupid decision will be to ...be to...um, er, sorry?"

APRIL: Pat Reynolds leads an intrepid group of VSAG divers to the Phillipines and while the trip put a whole new meaning on the term "luxury accomodation" it is understood that some of the group found some of the top dives in Manilla .

Baz and Marie Truscott achieve their prime objective in life and marry off their only daughter Sam . Is this just another , Spur of the moment ...blind romantic ...airhead ...girl...type decision ? Unlikely if you know Sam. You can bet this has been well worked out . And you can bet that Baz will still be paying for both of them at Tidal River - but only for the rest of his life .

Josie Mare writes the article that truly tested the moral policing of editor Mick Jeacle .

George Michael is arrested for performing an "obscene act" in a public toilet in Los Angeles. Police are tight-lipped about the nature of the act, but it is understood that Michael sang one of his old Wham hits.

Probably not dissimilar to a former editor breaking into song on a Thursday night at Tidal River after fully lubricating the vocal cords.

MAY: Not a big month for VSAG activities that I can identify . But in Paris a robot carries out open heart surgery on a human for the first time. In a further breakthrough, the robot takes the next day off and plays 36 holes of golf.

Kipland Kinkel 15, opens fire on his school cafeteria in Springfield, Oregon, with a semi-automatic weapon, killing 1 person and injuring 23. He is forced to write



1000 times : "I will not kill my fellow students and teachers....I will not kill my fellow students and teachers..."

JUNE: Des Williams takes on the tour leader role to Eaglehawk Neck in Tasmania . While the diving may not have been as good as the first trip 2 years earlier , Des did have the advantage of a dry suit this time and so suffered a little less. Most important was the anticipation of once again seeing the wife of the hotel operator who has kept a flame burning for Des ever since she focussed her mince pies on Des' bare knees on the previous trip.

Elsewhere Geri Halliwell left the Spice Girls causing a dramatic fall in the average IQ of the group.

JULY: Not big for events in the club . We should however be encouraged by the students of Mt Druitt High School who were suing the Daily Telegraph for an article about their poor HSC results . On hearing that the judge had dismissed 4 of their 5 claims one of the students said " oh well that still leaves us with 3....."

And the politicians never let us down . Senator Meg Lees denies that she is sanctimonious , but says she can fully understand the pain of those who call her that.

AUGUST: John Lawler leads VSAG on our first excursion of the Sea Life Centre at Phillip Island . The day was well picked as the wind would have blown us off the water if we had tried to go diving. A few interesting facts about the Great Whites around Seal Rocks will probably ensure that we appreciate the seals from deck level of the boats from now on .

SDFV do a great job in staging the Sunken Assets Seminar . A large number of club members supported the day and had a chance to hear our own Dessy Williams from the podium . As we all continue to age our appreciation of sunken assets seems to take on a higher degree of importance so the day was voted a big success.

For those who have a good memory ventriloquist Shari Lewis dies and is buried in a large sock with buttons for eyes.

SEPTEMBER: Des Williams manages another first by diving the Eden Tugs . In true club spirit Des doesn't take any club members with him. Leo Maybus plans to do a quick scooter trip down to the Titanic and promises not take Des .

Since the vote was organised before the "tug" trip Des is still awarded a Life Membership of VSAG thus joining a very select list of esteemed people. And "Life" it is . There is no doubt that some of these guys must be 100+ by now .

The International Olympic Committee is seen to be influencing our troops . Peter Vleugel builds a couple of houses for the voting committee and win the prestigious Clubman of the Year Award . We shouldn't tell him that he would have won it anyway. It was well deserved as it always is. Robert Birtles follows Peter's example and takes off the Literary Award. Judges Paul Tipping and Sant Khan each have a lifetime supply of anchor rope but unfortunately neither has a boat.

While the voting at VSAG is completed the Federal election is in full swing . Appalled at the unfairness of John Howard's tax plan, the ALP shows true intellect and campaigns instead on a retrospective capital gains tax .

OCTOBER: The wind was blowing as it seems to do at this time of year. To break up the mundane existence of the club Mick Jeacle did the absolutely unthinkable. He got rid of the Yellow Brick and replaced it with a sleek, state-of-the-art, Haines Hunter. Who thought this would happen in any of our lifetimes? Mick calls this his "ski" toy. He will explain that to you and I couldn't agree more.

It was noted that at the AGM in the previous month the club still did not apologise to the world for Gerry Devries .

Elections were won and lost in Australia. Proof that there really is a God shown by both Pauline Hanson and Dee Margetts losing their seats.

NOVEMBER: Paul and Tony Tipping did their usual November epic on the courts at Cranbourne South . Of course they had Marie Truscott do all the work and then claimed the credit . To Tony's own credit he did write the article for the magazine but it really was just a copy of the articles he had written in 1997, 1996, 1995, 1994, etc.....

The biggest event of the month was the club Garage Sale . Many hands make light work and also make the day a lot more fun. The sausage sizzle was a big success but I am sure it was only VSAG people who were eating. Ross Luxford does amazing things with a few pounds of snags.

Based on their 9% vote, the Democrats assume the reins of Government in Canberra.

Cheryl Kernott pleads with the media to leave politicians private lives alone. She starts the ball rolling by naming several male MPs who have fathered out-of-wedlock children.

DECEMBER: VSAG winds down the year with one of our highly successful Christmas bashes. Des wins a wetsuit but can't remember what it is for. Peter takes away the Nauru Airlines flight to Fiji. Alex Talay cannot believe his luck when he wins a masterpiece of art donated by the Carrot. Murray Black was reunited with Kate Cain. We got dessert without threatening to torch the place and , surprise,surprise,everyone had paid before they left.

In fact most of the men at the dinner were subject to severe blood pressure and hypertension after Pauline Hanson had been photographed at the Mulgrave by-election count wearing denim shorts.

Australians everywhere were forced to re-examine their fundamental beliefs and assumptions after Shane Warne admits to being stupid . And to complete the year on an appropriate note President Clinton does to Iraq what he always stopped short of doing to Monica Lewinsky.

POSTSCRIPT: Sorry about Gerry Devries .

## *SUMMER DIVING IN MELBOURNE*

BY DON ABELL

It's been a little while since I have been diving and I notice that a lot of dives over the last few months have been less than ideal. The elements have not been kind to VSAG but it seems that dive captains have forgotten the words of wisdom offered in days gone by; "to plan the ideal dive takes just that little bit more effort from the dive captain".

So it was with this in mind that I decided it was about time I put my ageing frame back into harness and provide the example. This was the background to the dive on Sunday 10th January.

I do confess that it has been so long since I was a dive captain (excluding Easter) that I had omitted to plan my own schedule and only realised on Thursday that I was booked to see ShowBoat on the Saturday that I was also supposed to be manning the phone.

Boat owners were contacted early on Saturday. Rather than waiting for the normal 6pm news I rang the bay report. I changed the message on the answerphone and dressed for the night while answering telephone calls. The planning worked and we had four boats (five were offered but only four were needed) and thirteen divers. The venue was changed from Flinders to Sorrento and the start time delayed - which had nothing to do with my Saturday night out.

As I drove down the highway on Sunday the radio told of fog on the Bellarine peninsular and I was supremely optimistic. When I arrived at Sorrento a breeze was lifting the bay just a little so it was not perfect. We planned to test the north wind and look outside the heads and then decide the dive plan.

The coast was being buffeted by rollers so that was not an option but Bass Strait looked better further out. A decision was made to drop onto a submarine and see what it was like.

Mick picked up the marks without a problem and we anchored on the 90ft Sub.

Visibility was better than 50ft and conditions were as good as it gets. I dropped down with Pat , Peter and Dale and could see the figure of the Sub. emerge as we were only half way down . Dale and I joined the others inside and glided the full length. Ross, gayly clad in a luminous dry suit, spied a crayfish in the wreck but it would have weighed by the ounce rather than by the pound so we passed it with a friendly wave.

After a relaxed reconnoitre of the outside Dale and I took our leave and surfaced. As divers came up it was agreed that few if any of us had seen this Sub. in such ideal conditions .

The sun had burned away the cloud , the water was flattening and the day was about as perfect as the dive had been. Back to the Lonsdale pier for a bite of lunch and the mandatory tall tales intermingled with a few good jokes.

Pat has turned out to be a good supporter of Bobby's new Pinnacle wetsuit from Sonar. He likes the way it "sucks onto his body" and rumour has it that he is asking Bobby to make him one for social wear .

A second dive was taken in the slack water off Queenscliffe. Perfect again. No decapods but great reef scenery as you only get in the heads area of Port Phillip Bay.

By the time we headed in the bay was almost flat. There was a queue at the boat ramp but Peter Vleugel is an expert and seemed to get straight through the line of other boats and cars. Before we knew it we were in the beer garden of the Koonya looking over Sorrento beach.

It just doesn't get much better.

I am interested in one thing. Does anyone else in the club get worried by the fact that Ted Cornish has the responsibility of first mate on Mick's new luxury cruiser ? And should somebody alert the Coast Guard ?

## *VSAG'S MISSING DIVER - MYSTERY SOLVED*

BY DES WILLIAMS

I haven't written an article for FATHOMS for some time now, I guess because I haven't done much diving with V.S.A.G of late. I stand accused of being awarded a life membership, then not being seen around the Club!

Well, I can assure you that I still love the old V.S.A.G and only a heavy workload, family commitments and devotion to the restoration of my old deep sea diving outfit has kept me out of the water with the Club.

As I write this, I am on holidays in Hobart with my family (Jan '99) and I even took the chance to meet up with Don Abell at Salamanca Market for a coffee, during his annual pilgrimage for the races at the Hobart Cup. My conscience was nudged, as Don being our new FATHOMS Editor is on the prowl for items. So, I present this summary of my activities if you are interested.

During November and December, I was occupied with some dives and a Sydney conference with the Diving Historical Society (DHS) of which I am a member. Over the last year, I have been assembling components for my old deep sea diving rig, as most of you will know I have been bitten very badly by the diving historical bug and have found a way of combining my two recreational loves of history and diving. In a previous issue of FATHOMS, I documented some of the restoration work done by Graeme Blanchard, on my old 1943 U.S Navy diving helmet. Since then, I have had to locate and purchase, lead boots, old canvas type diving dress, weight belt and air/communication lines. This has all taken time and money, but at last the old unit is complete. I have made several test dives in the meantime. At the DHS Annual Conference in Sydney, I won the annual Working Equipment award for the year, for turning my old hat into a working unit, a great surprise. I hope in the near future, to organise a dive day for those in the Club who are likewise historically minded.

In September last, I travelled to Eden with my hard-hat dive mate, John Allen, to scuba dive the old tugs TASMANTHAULER and HENRY BOLTE. We had a great weekend and I can recommend Eden. In fact, we are planning a return in April '99, to dive Eden with other members of the DHS from Sydney in our old helmet gear.

Whilst here in Tasmania, I managed to fit in a dive at one of my favourite locations, Eaglehawk Neck on the Tasman Peninsula. Only got one dive in due to N.E winds (worst for this area) and we dived Boulder Point, near where our V.S.A.G trip of June '98 was restricted also due to poor weather. The dive was interesting, plenty of small crays peering out from ledges and some beautiful rock faces covered in jewel anemones in various colours. So my dream of returning to the spectacular wreck of the NORD, did not happen, but it was good to be back in the water and catch up with dive operator Gary Myors at Eaglehawk Dive Centre.

Our holiday in Tasmania has been wonderful and the number of spectacular places to dive are endless, will V.S.A.G ever Summer holiday in the island state? It has been a dream of mine for many years, but overseas trips seem to be more appealing to members. Pity really, I know Barry Truscott has always been keen on a Tassy adventure, all we need are a few more members with the same interest! The Black Rock Underwater Group recently set off for Tassy, with members helping to subsidise member boat fares on the ferry in return for dive space in the boats once in Tasmania. Let's see how that works out!

See you at the Club.....