

FATHOMS

\$5

DECEMBER 2001 - JANUARY 2002

If undelivered,
return to VSAG,
Box 2526W GPO,
Melb Vic 3001

Cover design and photography by P. Ilya Cardinaletti
Murray Black inside wreck - VSAG Solomons Islands Trip May 1994

VSAG
Victorian Sub-Aqua Group

EST 1954



VSAG Committee Members

President

Peter Vleugel*
 PO Box 304 Mornington 3931
 9787 1298 (home)
 9787 1284 (work)
 9787 1285 (fax)
 0418 315 484 (mobile)
crest.bco@satlink.com.au

Vice President

Andy Mastrowicz*
 224 Wattle Valley Road Camberwell
 3124
 9809 0984 (home)
 9201 7117 (work)
 0402 060 711 (mobile)
amastrow@agi.com.au

Secretary

John Mills
 10 Wells Avenue Boronia 3155
 9761 0960 (home)
 9369 2377 (work)

Assistant Secretary

Leo Maybus
 2 Olsen Court Mooroolbark 3138
 9727 1568 (home)
 0418 375 102 (mobile)

Treasurer

Priya Cardinaletti
 PO Box 864 Boronia 3155
 9761 0960 (home)
 0414 310 727 (mobile)
pcardina@vicnet.net.au

Newsletter Editor, Assistant Social Secretary

John Lawler*
 7 Cloris Avenue Beaumaris 3193
 9589 4020 (home)
 0414 922 916 (mobile)
Jylawler@tpgi.com.au

Assistant Newsletter Editor

Bruce Dart*
 12 Alicudi Avenue Frankston
 3199
 9787 6318 (home)
 0407 311 544 (mobile)
maritek@peninsula.hotkey.net.au

Assistant Newsletter Editor

Steve Jacoby
 529 Station St Carrum 3197
 9772 2635 (home)
 0412 352 617 (mobile)
steve.jacoby@nre.vic.gov.au

Points Scorer, Social Secretary

Gerry DeVries
 16 Vitner Avenue Croydon 3136
 9725 2381 (home)
 0417 324 608 (mobile)

Property Officer, Safety Officer

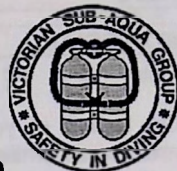
Pat Reynolds
 14 Nurla Court Frankston 3199
 9789 1092 (home)
 0497 334 276 (mobile)

*Committee meets the Second
 Monday in the Month at the Leighoak Hotel (8PM)*

FATHOMS

Official Journal of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group

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VSAG General Meetings

Bell's Hotel
157 Moray Street (cnr Coventry Street)
South Melbourne, 8.00 pm
The 3rd Thursday in the month

Committee Meetings

Leighoak Hotel
1555 Dandenong Road Oakleigh,
8.00 pm - The 2nd Monday in the month

Editorial Submissions to:

John Lawler
7 Cloris Avenue, Beaumaris 3193
Jylawler@tpgi.com.au

EDITORIAL**- JOHN LAWLER.**

On behalf of your committee, a very happy new year to all VSAG members, families and friends. It is hard to believe that as this is being written, Christmas and New Year celebrations are in the past!

On the subject of celebrations, the VSAG Christmas party at Milanos was a great party and one of the better venues we have enjoyed. Members will be pleased to know, the committee has already booked this same venue again for this year on December 6th. Thanks to Peter Jones for all the effort put in to making this such a great night. Well done.

The committee will meet for the first time this year on February 10th, and some very new and interesting initiatives will be finalised to stimulate more diver interest. These initiatives will see some of the Club funds utilised for this objective. Also some interesting Family day boating trips have been put into the calendar. I had the opportunity to do one of these trips with my fishing club and the day was really wonderful. These plans will appear in the next two editions of Fathoms and are something to really look forward to in 2002.

With new changes to the commercial diving industry, and having had some long discussions with dive operators, it may well be VSAG may need to put our diving practices under review to ensure our club is conducting our diving to the highest levels of safety.

With regret, we have to report that two of our members have had their diving careers ended through medical advice. Life Member Bob Scott and Frances D'Arcy-Tehan have taken medical advice and will not be diving in future. I'm sure that both are disappointed in this outcome and we wish them all the very best in the future. It goes without saying that Bob and Frances would be welcome as a guest on our club boats any time they wished to come out and join in the club activities.

The Harbour Master, T.M. Muir has issued a notice to all Mariners, that the 2002 edition of the Victorian Tide Tables contain errors in the Port Phillip Heads Tidal Streams. Whilst the times of Slack Water are correct, the notions "Flood" and "Ebb" in the column headed "Start" have been reversed. The word "Ebb" should read "Flood" and "Flood" should read

"Ebb". Tidal Streams can be downloaded from the VCA site (www.vicchannels.vic.gov.au). Oh Boy!!

The next major diving event will be the Easter Trip to the Prom - don't miss out - make your bookings with Priya.

A dive trip to the HMAS Swan in Dunsborough and HMAS Perth in Albany is in the planning for 2003. This is one trip not to be missed and I can speak from personal experience! I dived the Perth in Nov 2001 and I plan to dive the ship again in Feb/March this year. I am putting together a video/photo/clippings presentation and when this is complete, a night will be put aside to show off this extraordinary new and very exciting dive site in Albany.

Stay well - happy and safe diving.

John.Lawler.
EDITOR.

Assistant Editor's Note: Special thanks to Elise Jacoby for typing in all the Fathoms stuff that was lost when someone who should know better forgot to backup his computer - Dad

Labour Day Weekend – Cape Jaffa, South Australia

The Labour day public holiday this year is on Monday 11th March and Andy Mastrowicz has booked 6 cabins at Cape Jaffa, near Robe in S.A. for a long weekend dive trip. There is a mix of 3, 4 and five berth cabins available at reasonable rates (approx: \$45 - \$55 per night – 2 adults, extra adult \$8 or thereabouts!). Contact Andy as soon as possible for details on 9809 0984. Cut off for bookings will be the Febraury general meeting.

EASTER – Wilsons Promontory

Easter is early this year (Good Friday is the 29th March), so there are only two VSAG meetings left to book AND PAY for the Prom. The club has 25 sites booked from the 28th (Thursday) through to the 1st April (Monday). The cost is \$35 per adult, and kids are free. The last two years has seen great weather and diving! By the end of March we just might be getting some Summer, so come and join us at the Prom! Further details from Priya on 9761 0960.

DIVING THE PERTH

Story by John Lawler

It was the article in DIVE LOG that caught my attention. "Are you going to be one of the first divers to visit the HMAS PERTH?"

By sheer good luck and timing I was to go on a business trip to Perth (the city) on the Wednesday prior to the weekend sinking of the former HMAS Perth in Albany. An opportunity too good to miss, and I was on my way to Albany to see at first hand one of the great experiences of my diving career...the final preparations and the sinking of the former "HMAS PERTH" in King George Sound, near Seal

Island, Albany.

Prior phone calls and e-mails to Ron Moore of the Albany Scuba Diving Academy, resulted in wonderful accommodation in a very home away from home B&B arranged, being met at the airport by (a very, very busy) Ron Moore, and transported to my "home" for the next 8 days and being made exceptionally welcome from the



very start of this adventure.

Thursday 22/11 was settle in day, arranging transport, check out pubs, eating houses, warfs etc, and the layout of the great and historic City of Albany. In the afternoon, a meeting at the Albany Scuba Diving Academy to discuss the visits to the ship on Friday 23/11, meet Ron's team and check out the dive gear after the trip over from Melbourne. (A good move as it turned out, as some gear had been damaged...no problem...situation fixed in a flash, all ready to go, great service!) Emma Crawford, Ron's assistant (for ever now will be called Emma Gem) was inspirational in handling people, phone calls, filling tanks, taking bookings and working at a pace that was draining just to watch, and all with a broken finger!

By now Albany was witnessing the expected arrival of many people from all parts of Australia and Internationally for this big event, plus the arrival of a Collins Class submarine. Several hours in the hotel at Middleton Beach, meeting and listening to the experts who were involved in the sinking of the "Swan", was just mind boggling. Present at this chat were representatives from the SA Tourism Authority and the SA consultant who is to head up the sinking of the "Hobart" near Adelaide. All in Albany to gain experience for their big event.

The sinking of these ships to create artificial reefs is no simple matter and the stories and technical information I

picked was fascinating and very exciting. By now it had started to dawn on me that there was an undercurrent of passion and dedication from people involved in the creation of these artificial reefs and to this day I have been left with an enormous respect for their (mostly) unpaid, voluntary efforts.

Friday 23/11 and it is now well and truly into countdown to Saturday 24/11 8AM! Ron Moore has to transport media representatives from TV Stations and the Press to the ship for interviews with Roy Gabriel, the ex Canadian Mounted Police officer turned explosives expert, in charge of the timing and sinking of the ship. It was Roy's decision to move the plan from 3.08PM (PERTH'S number 38) to 8AM due to some major concerns with the wind factor. I was privileged to be invited along to join this group and to witness the presentation given by Roy Gabriel to the media on board the Perth. (There was a catch however, as I was to be part of the two man deckie crew assisting the Journalists!) Boarding the ship required people to step onto a barge which then moved hard up to a giant hole cut into the stern of the ship and carefully man handled onto the deck.

Roy Gabriel was riveting in the details he gave and his explanation of just how the ship is set up to be sunk, from the great care on the ship to the great care off the ship whereby a spotter plane was to be used around the time of the sinking to ensue no mammals were in the vicinity, as dolphins had been visiting yesterday.

We are now standing on a lower deck of this huge ship, which in around 20 hours would be resting on the seabed at 30 meters. Appreciating we are told the ship is now "HOT" (technical term for ready to blast), and that all around our heads are red charge wires leading to the detonators below really had the adrenalin pumping! Roy explains that the explosives are placed to ensure the ship sinks bow first.

Media conference over, back to base to collect another group of people and back to the ship for a three-hour stay, as Ron Moore had technical applications to work on. I now had the opportunity to move freely around the ship with approval from the Security and SAS people, and this gave me time to talk with some of the last people on board, mostly technical marine engineers and volunteers.

In moving from stern to bow and deck to deck, I was able to appreciate just how carefully and expertly the ship was prepared over the past two years for diving safety. Any real danger area was sealed off and on all levels holes had been cut in the sides and floors to make entry and exit from the diving activities easier and safer. Despite this however this wreck is full of pure adrenalin pumping, penetration diving, as I was to witness over the next couple of days.

Into volunteer mode now, I joined the last remaining volunteers to offload the final pieces of machinery, compressors, cutters, waste, wood,

hammers etc, etc onto a work boat and the final farewell to the floating ship as we turned the laden vessel for Albany. (Ron you are forgiven for leaving me behind when you departed!)

From the time I arrived at Albany, the radio stations were giving ongoing updates and countdowns for the big event and it had the desired effect on the friendly people of Albany. Saturday 24/11 had finally arrived and the weather gods were very kind as the day was perfect. Thousands of people were on the move very early to get the best vantage points, and by 7am our team was now stationed on high cliffs at Frenchman's Bay about 2km from the Perth. All spectators, either on land or on boats were required to be no closer than 1km from the site. At around this distance on the water there were boats of all sizes stretched in a wide arc around the Perth site.

The tension can be felt building and at 8am the countdown to zero begins and after a 30 second delay 46 charges explode all around the inner hull of the ship below the water line. The beautiful old ship is now filling with water at a rate of around a million litres per minute. But there is a problem starting to develop! The ship was set to sink bow first and this is clearly not happening. At the three minute mark the ship is still level. At around the four minute mark the ship starts to list 30 degrees to port and cries of "oh no" can be heard. But then the most spectacular scene imaginable occurs as the ship comes

back to centre, the stern slips down into the water first, then the ship sinks perfectly upright dead straight with the black mast the last sign of Perth as it rises around 4 metres above the new artificial reef and new dive site. The crowd cheers and cheers and the challenges for hundreds of people has been finally met!

The event was celebrated on that night with The Gala Artificial Reef Ball at the Extravaganza Gallery at Middleton Beach. This was a BlackTie party to end all parties...wonderful WA wines, great foods, elegant ladies, sincere speeches and the band kept us all rocking well into the night. It was very memorable and will be a moveable annual event.

Sunday 25/11 saw the clearance divers descend on the Perth to check out the safety issues and the news came through mid Sunday that the wreck was clear and safe. We were on our way to the next great dive experience.

Monday 26/11 at 6am, some 20 divers met at the Albany Scuba Diving Academy for the pre dive briefing on the Inaugural Dive on the Perth. I was the first resident Victorian Diver to dive on the Perth so I was informed! Our charter boat was the splendid "Silver Star". This vessel has the lot! Hot tea/coffee, rear dive platforms, toilets, viewing bridge and more creature comforts than could be expected from a charter boat, only bettered by the great and very helpful crew.... just the perfect way to go diving on the Perth and we are on our way.

At the dive site, despite only two days after the sinking, all the marker and mooring buoys were already in place and in no time we were tethered to a buoy allocated to the charter boats. (4 buoys allocated to private boats and four to charters, with a minimum stay of two hours)

Allocated to our dive masters, second dive plan briefing finalised, kitted up and into the magic of 20 meters plus visibility and 18 degrees water temp, we descended onto the stern of the Perth at around 26meters. The wreck was awesome and fantastic to see.

The mast and funnels appeared to go up forever. Our dive took us along the port side, into the mess room, out again and onto the bow. We turned back to an entrance below the bridge, entered and did a brief check out of this area. Here we saw the awful impact of the rush of water from the stern, through the ship, hitting a large piece of aluminium wall divider and it was similar to a demolition ball crushing into it. Out and into a room below the bridge was a hole cut into the bridge floor. We edged up into the highlight of this dive, the blackened out bridge, with one swivel chair still in place. From this point we could look down and out to the bow, still clearly visible, as the captain would have done in directing the operations. Looking out from this part of the ship is just so vivid in my mind! I can still see the windscreen wipers hanging off where the glass once was...just a fantastic sight! We stayed in this area

for some time as there was a lot to take in.

We finally moved out and up to the mast area at the 3 meter mark for a final look down and around the ship. Our first and very exciting dive on the Perth was over.....until to-morrow.

My sincere thanks to Ron and Shirley Moore for the great hospitality shown

to me. Thanks Ron for giving me the opportunity to meet so many dedicated and interesting people, in particular Roy Gabriel and John Jennings and not to forget Norm? To all the folk associated with your very professional dive operation, thank you. I will return!

J.L.

(The writer of this article is a Victorian sport diver and was in Albany independently with no vested interest in any of the operations or Dive Operators)

FISHING REGS UPDATE

To clarify the confusion created over the fishing regs at the (January VSAG) meeting, this is the situation.

SOUTHERN ROCK LOBSTER (CRAYFISH)...LIMIT OF 2 PER DIVER PER DAY...POSSESSION LIMIT OF 4 ONLY. THERE IS NO BOAT OR VEHICLE LIMIT – OF COURSE SIZE & SEASONAL LIMITS APPLY.

ABALONE...LIMIT OF 10 PER DIVER PER DAY...MAKE UP OF 8 BLACK / 2 GREEN (WHEN GREEN IN SEASON / LIMIT OF 2 GREEN ONLY) OR 10 BLACK. POSSESSION LIMIT OF 10 ONLY. THERE IS A BOAT / VEHICLE LIMIT OF 50 – SEE DETAILS AND FURTHER INFO IN THE REGS.

THESE REGULATIONS APPLY TO IN/ON OR NEAR VIC COASTAL WATERS.

J.L.

Fishing for votes with new bill

By **EWIN HANNAN**
STATE EDITOR

The Bracks Government will seek to boost Labor's environmental credentials before the state election by reviving its contentious plans for marine parks and promoting a national strategy to encourage private sector companies to "go green".

Premier Steve Bracks yesterday revealed that the government would re-introduce the marine parks bill into parliament next year, modifying proposed legislation previously withdrawn by Environment and Conservation Minister Sherryl Garbutt.

Labor withdrew the bill after no agreement could be reached on compensation for those affected by the fishing bans in the parks. The bill would have set up 12 marine parks around Victoria, where fishing would have been banned.

It would have offered \$1.2 million in "transitional assistance" to those affected, but they would have been denied the right to seek further compensation for lost earnings through the Supreme Court. Mr Bracks was unable to say whether the new package would be ready by the autumn parliamentary session. Sources confirmed the initial package would be modified,

but the details had yet to be finalised.

The State Government will host a meeting of up to 100 chief executives in February, seeking private sector support for so-called "sustainability indexes".

Group caught with 2300 abalone

Four men and a woman will be charged with fisheries offences after being caught with more than 2300 abalone, worth about \$34,000, near Bairnsdale on Victoria's east coast. Police and fisheries officers also seized two vehicles, a boat and diving gear.

DIVE REPORT
SUNDAY 2ND DECEMBER.
DIVE CAPTAIN: JOHN LAWLER.

I've made some good decisions and some not so good decisions as dive captain when it comes to whether we go or not if the weather is not looking too promising. Sometimes the Don Abel saying that "you won't know if you don't go" works out right and it was on that basis that the dive for 2/12/01 went ahead, despite the forecast not in our favour.

This was a dive put on for Peter Jones. Peter's working hours make it hard to get a Sunday dive in as he sometimes finishes work around three am. This was designed to get to Sorrento later in the morning to let Pete get some good sleep in before diving.

We had Mick Jeacle's boat with a crew of four and mine also with a crew of four. On arrival at Sorrento the weather was overcast and showery. . but despite some "cracks" at the dive captain (all in good fun of course?) no one was against the dive, so off we headed to the 90ft Sub.

The trip through the Rip was a bit testy and rough and the condition on the dive site was uncomfortable. The swells were big and long! Peter and I kitted up, went over the side and down the anchor line into dirty water and it was similar to a washing machine on the sea bed. Within 60 seconds we looked at each other to confirm what we were thinking, and we both knew this was not for us and we headed back up the line to the surface and out.

Darren Pearce and David Robertson decided to have a dive, although David was not in good shape, but was brave enough to have a go. They entered the water, however, David realised he was not up this dive and returned back onto the boat. This is the true sign of a very responsible diver with the right attitude to diver safety. When Peter and I were on the bottom we noticed the anchor was a bit wedged and this gave Darren a reason to at least have a dip and he dropped down, adjusted the anchor and returned to the boat.

Mick's crew experienced the same swelly conditions, however, they dived the wreck. Mick said he was "doing cartwheels" inside the wreck! This wreck is open/broken at the bow and allows for swells to push hard into the wreck. It also makes the sub a safer wreck for the same reason as it allows divers exit points which are generally visible on good vis days.

The rain was on and off all this time so we headed into the bay and rested at Point Nepean for some hot drinks and lunch.

Despite all this we still had a lot of fun and a lot of laughs and it was good to have Pete out for a dive.

My saving grace came from all the positive comments on this "different" dive day...each dive, good or not, still has a learning curve...this day was full of it... safety won out - conditions were handled with safety - experience got the boats out and back through the Rip and all in all smiles at the end of the day.

I would have to say that on this occasion the decision to put on the dive was not one of my better ones...win some - lose some! Thanks to all who still had faith and came out for the day...it is always great to be out on the best bit of water in the world...the Southern end of Port Phillip Bay.

Help!! LOOKING FOR A DV, BUOYANCE / BACKPACK AND DIVE BOTTLE

Dear John, Can you run an advert for me in the next FATHOMS magazine.

My gear is very old, and some of it needs replacing.
[its still from my dive days in South Africa, and very close to 20 years old now]

I'm looking for the following:-

Octopus DV rig.

Backpack / buoyancy jacket

Possibly a new tank too [My two tanks are both 22 years old !]

At the rate of diving [Currently 2 to 4 times a year], second hand gear will suit me fine. I'm sure there are club members with surplus equipment, or who have given up diving and still have good equipment ready to sell.

[Well - they now have a willing buyer]

For parties with above equipment to sell, I can be contacted on:-
Phones: 0410 541 647 or 03 / 9894 1228 Fax: 03 / 9840 1938

Thanks and regard,
Herb E

XMAS At Jervis Bay

We were all looking forward to the VSAG Xmas trip to Jervis Bay which had been organised by Andy but as most of us we were finishing our Christmas pudding in Melbourne I wondered if we'd ever get there, and if we did what would we find?

The NSW fires didn't sound good and Jervis Bay, Huskisson and Vincentia were all being described by the news bulletins as cut off and under threat. Most people were travelling up on Boxing Day, Andy, Gail, Nicole & Joe were first to arrive but only after having to spend a night at Bateman's Bay. Lots of phone calls were made and the rest of the group crept through the smoke over the next couple of days and into the Hidden Creek caravan park.

The effects of the fires were all around us, the park was OK, power back on, but smoke was thick in the air. We were a few clicks out of Huskisson and the drive into town showed just how bad it must have been, several factories burnt out and fire stopped only feet from lots of homes, the petrol station and Bowling Club. But despite the heroic efforts of the Fire Services a score of homes were lost in the area.

The caravan park advertised its 'real camping' experience, this seemed to suit some VSAGers more than others... when we arrived Pat came running out and recommended we turn around, mumbling about feral



BLACK CHRISTMAS:

birds and huge insects that would carry the kids off. I must admit the bugs (mossies, march flies and midgies) were out in force as we were on a salt water creek (the high tide also crept perilously close at times too) but after a few days your immunity seemed to increase and the bugs didn't bother you too much.

The first day's diving from Andy's boat was interesting as the smoke cut visibility to about 400m. We took a GPS mark off the river entrance at Huskisson then called the Coastal Patrol and asked for a bearing to Point Perpendicular – clearly not something they get asked for every day!



Seven days of fires and no end in sight

The dive sites around the Point are spectacular: 200' sheer cliffs dropping into about 60' of water falling away to about 100'. Clear water, 60' - 70' vis and warm around 22 degrees made for very pleasant diving. Lots of huge boulders and swirl throughs, the ever present sea urchins and blue groper that are typical of NSW, but here you also have the chance of coming across large schools of kingfish, as happened to the group the following day and spotting the Eastern Blue Devil, which is the striped cousin of the common Blue Devil we get in Victoria.



- Steve Jacoby

With around 13 divers and one boat we just did the one tank dive in the morning before the bay chopped up

and rotated everyone over the next few days with most having a good two or three day's diving.

A treat at night which we all enjoyed were the movies courtesy of Andy's in-law's (Joe & Jim) who organised DVD's played through a laptop and projected onto a big screen (through the smoke and bugs!).

New Years saw most head off for a good meal at the RSL, followed by a quiet drink back at camp - Paul Tipping set the scene for the night by slipping on his moccasins, smoking a couple of cones and playing most of his favourite songs from a truly crap collection of CDs.

New Years' Day was a lay-day from diving. The fires were flaring up in the south now, threatening Sussex Inlet and cutting the highway. Peter & Chris Vleugel were due up after

New Years and made a sterling effort, getting as close as Ulladulla, forced to wait there a couple of days before sensibly turning back to Narooma for at least some sort of holiday. Others were worried about getting out, with most people pulling out a few days early choosing the long route home via the Hume or detours through Kangaroo Valley.

Certainly a memorable Xmas, with some fine dives and wonderful beaches to enjoy around Jervis Bay - and the weather was superb (we actually got a summer). Thanks to Andy and Gail for organising everything and to the Mastrowicz clan, the Truscotts (Barry & Marie Craig and family), Paul & Leslie Tipping and family, the odd couple (Tony Tipping and Pat Reynolds), Darren, John & Priya and Me Maybus & Nat for their good company.

DIVE REPORT - Family Day
SUNDAY 16TH DECEMBER - DC: JOHN LAWLER.

The dive scheduled for this day was a Scallop Dive and Family outing. The meeting place was the Rye boat ramp area where we found good facilities to set up camp and of course launch our boats. Mick Jeacle must have wondered what had happened to VSAG as no one had turned up where he was - at Sorrento!! No sooner off the mobile and he had joined us all at Rye.

Steve's Family, Shane's Family, Dan's Family and Annie Jeacle's brother was out from Scotland for a stay, all looking forward to the big day.

Divers were allocated to boats and the Scallop beds were soon on the depth sounder. The catch from all the divers

was very big and full bag limits were soon in the boat in record time.

Josie Mare was under strict instruction from Carmen not to come home if she did not have a bag full of scallops in hand.

Josie had her quota, however she fell foul of an equipment malfunction, which caused her some anxious moments on the surface as the BC wouldn't inflate and scallops weigh a ton. Keeping a clear head and not panicking, Josie inflated the dry suit, giving sufficient buoyancy to stay afloat and put up the safety sausage. We soon had her and Carmen's scallops in the boat and were headed back to the ramp.



We had children on board, wrapped up in life jackets, and they were all very excited to see all the going on's. It is an experience to see the delight on people's faces when they see things for the first time, things that we take for granted, having done these locations so many times over the years.

We off loaded the divers and the catches, then took on mothers and more children for a run down to the South Channel Fort and then to a channel marker to see the seals. The excitement from all on board was just great as the kids and mums were having a ball. It's amazing how much pleasure the seals can give visitors who have never seen them before, despite the smell down wind! I

personally got a big boost having the families on board as they are so appreciative to have this much fun as well the learning curve. Any time for me to do this.

Back to ramp, wash down the boat and the rest of the afternoon was just pleasant and relaxing in the sun. BBQ's were on hand, sizzling foods on the go and all sorts of gourmet offerings were on the table. The day of fun was over and all packed up to get tired and happy little kids (and a couple of big kids) home from another wonderful VSAG day.

Thank you to all those who made the effort to contribute to the day.



Our next Family day will be at RYE JETTY on Feb 10th, Andy will be DC.

DIVE REPORT

SUNDAY 30TH DEC – Heads Area - JOHN LAWLER.

It comes as a bit of a shock when the Saturday night prior a dive day comes around and the phone only rings twice! The weather forecast for this dive was really good and it was just two divers who booked in for the dive!

My boat was host to Robert Birtles and Bruce Dart and after the usual load up at Sorrento we were off to Shortlands Bluff to catch the slack water. People who know me will be aware that this part of the Southern end of Port Phillip Bay is my all time favourite dive location. I really love diving this area as it always comes up with best surprises, from huge rays, huge crays, wobbies, wonderful diversity of fish life, cheeky cuttlefish and on some occasions the best visibility possible. You can have the wrecks and so on, give me this dive location any day!

I did this dive solo and the water was warm, with vis around the 10mtr mark. The depth sounder had picked up good reefy terrain and luckily I fell right into the spot and right on dead slack water. For the next 40 minutes the dive went into fish homes in the ledges, over the top of kelp covered bommies and down into large deep holes where all sorts of shells and one bottle lay. As with the last two dives in this area, I did not see any rock lobsters, which is most unusual as the bay is experiencing an abundance of them at present.

My dive was up to the usual best standard and for me all too soon it was over and back to the boat.

Rob and Bruce went in on another promising area picked up on the sounder however the tides must have been early as they were soon carried away from the bommies and into a drift dive. This was a bit unfortunate, but still the boys had a good look at a lot of very interesting territory.

With the tide running into the bay, we headed out through the rip, swung west and down towards Barwon Heads. We looked at possible dive sites for around an hour, before returning to an area a couple of K's west of Point Lonsdale. We saw a lone cray pot marker in the water and the depth sounder showed the area to be very rocky and covered with large bommies (the famous ship the "Tampa" was waiting for the pilot boat to come out so we called this reef "Tampa Reef").

Despite a bit of swell, Rob and Bruce decided to dive. The territory was similar in parts to Flinders and several rock lobsters were seen and one landed. However this area was in the nursery stage or the cray boats had potted out all the bigger crays.

We headed back inside and went into Queenscliff for lunch. It was a magical day, sun shining, very little wind and we were all really lapping up this perfect dive day around the bay.

Time to head home, and on the way did a visit to Popes Eye, the seal's new

home and naturally, as we do one fine days, Portsea pier!

Thanks to Rob and Bruce for great company, great diving mates and a lot of fun....any time guys!

Lost Scuba Diving

Late one evening, two grim-faced policemen knocked on the door of a man who, the previous day, had lost his wife scuba diving: "We're sorry to disturb you sir, but we have some information concerning your wife. Actually, we have some bad news, some pretty good news and some really terrific news. Which would you like to hear first?"

Obviously fearing the worst, the husband asked for the bad news first...

"We're sorry to have to inform you, sir," the policeman said, "...we've found your wife's body off the Heads this afternoon."

The clearly shocked and distraught husband composed himself enough to ask in a shaky voice... "Well what's the pretty good news?"

"When we pulled her up," said the policeman, "...she had two five pound lobsters attached to her!"

"What?" a confused husband exclaimed, "...so what's the really terrific news?"

Smiling and smacking his lips, the officer replied, "We're going to pull her up again tomorrow!"

DIVE REPORT**SUNDAY 20th Jan – 90' Sub – Steve Jacoby.**

It was clear from the interest shown at the January VSAG meeting on the Thursday before, that there would be a good turnout for this dive. The weather report looked good with light northerlies and temperatures of 35 – 40 being forecast depending on which radio station you listened in on.

The 90' Sub was listed with Pat as DC, however, he unfortunately had to pull out and I was happy to fill in. As it turned out we had more boats than the NZ navy...Mick, John, Barry and Neville all brought their craft along and later on we would meet up with Andy and his clan outside the Heads.

Also diving was Paul Tipping, Ted Cornish, Rob Birtles, Josie & John, Andrew Marshall, Darren and Jeff Miller. I joined Barry with Craig and Liam on the Truscott boat – space was at a premium here because we had to carry enough lollies to keep Liam going all day – I have never seen quite so many jubes fit into one mouth at the same time over such a long period!

The promise of fine conditions and a little bit of summer also got more than a few VSAGers out: half of Melbourne was visiting the Peninsula this day and not long after 9.00 am both cars and trailers were having to seek a park along the Portsea – Sorrento road as all spaces at the boat ramp parking bays were full.

Mick's was the last boat to leave the ramp, which had less to do with Mick running late and more to do with Ted's failure to run back fast enough from Blairgowrie where he ended up having to park the trailer!

Neville was keen to run in his new Yamaha 115hp motor which was getting its inaugural run and from a first listen, it seemed to purr almost as smoothly as Bazza's Merc. So it was a procession of three boats that made the run through the Heads and onto the 90' Sub site in smooth conditions with maybe a half metre swell. Clearing the Heads it was obvious this was going to be a busy day – boats all over the place (including Andy) and a couple of private boats as well as a commercial dive operator already occupying our intended dive spot. A quick straw poll saw us move to the reef area off Point Lonsdale back beach which has been becoming a favourite location this summer.

All boats dived within 300 – 400m of each other, ignoring the 200m exclusion zone Mick declared around his boat (I think that only applied to Barry though..) and I think most found very good reef / kelp beds in 10 – 12m of water and 20 – 25' vis. The surge on the bottom was nothing to worry about and non-existent on the lee side of the bommies that appeared to run parallel to the shore in broken ridges perhaps 1 – 2m

high. At that depth, everything was covered in kelp and you worked pretty hard in places to push through it to find the ledges and holes.

A fair bit of the reef was honeycombed and many of the ledges had holes and openings through the top which appeared likely cray holes. A number of small crays were spotted – probably just size, with the largest landed being three pounds (pinched 5m off Mick's anchor).

The depth and conditions allowed a long dive – Barry & I both had close to an hour and at no stage did it become boring or did you think that you might not be a chance to see a cray just around the corner. In the end I was starting to feel the cold and was looking forward to warming up in the hot sun, only to surface and find the change had come through early and a cool breeze was blowing from the south west.

Lunch was taken off Point Lonsdale pier. Neville and his crew called it quits and headed in. Liam caught his first fish during the lunch break, then his second, and third... they were coming in quicker than the jubes were going down by now and it was time to look for a second dive site.

Slack water was close so the three remaining boats headed towards Mick's Reef off Queenscliff in about 20m. Despite the mini weather change conditions were still good with a half metre chop and overcast conditions & no shipping for hours.

Barry decided not to dive, so I joined up with John Lawler and with just a slight current running we dropped into some good territory that just got better as it went. In some respects this area was a mirror of the first dive only with all the features exaggerated. The bommies and mini drop-offs were 3 – 5m in size with deep ledges and wonderful growth. Fish life was far more prominent, very large dusky morwong over the kelp, leatheries, boarfish, blue throated wrasse, old wives and large blue-devils in the good ledges. In this sort of area you always feel as though you're a chance for a good size cray and sure enough we came across a beauty, perhaps 6 – 8 pounds, in a ledge that will serve him well for a very long time to come. I was initially inclined to swim on, thinking the area may have easier pickings but the prospect of such a catch turned us both around, surely two (reasonably) intelligent humans can outwit a simple lobster! Alas, no, no amount of stalking, shimmying, stretching or out-flanking was going to shift him from his home. Badly beaten and out of time I indicated to John that I was heading up and he indicating he'd be along in a minute.

Sure enough, I'd barely taken my gear off when JL surfaces with a cray! Unbelievable! I'm sure there wasn't any sleight of hand there but next time I'll remember to check his bag is empty before the dive!

Terrific dive and good fun. Trip back to the ramp at Sorrento was

uneventful – little did we know what was to be in store for us for the next few hours! To say the boat ramp was busy would be the world's biggest understatement. The queue stretched all the way through the car park, up the hill and on to the Sorrento – Portsea Road! An hour and half later the first of our boats was pulled from the water and we

could begin the slow crawl home. The Peninsula seemed grid-locked in all directions - even the Melbourne Road through the back was at a standstill. Beware Sundays on the Peninsula in January if you are in a hurry to get home! Traffic hassles aside, a very enjoyable day on a couple of terrific dive locations.

Care urged over reef's great grumpy groper

BRISBANE

An environmental lobby group yesterday urged authorities not to rush a decision on a giant groper scaring scuba divers on the Great Barrier Reef.

The two-metre Queensland groper has attacked divers around the historic Yongala wreck dive site, 100 kilometres south-east of Townsville.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Queensland Government and dive operators were to meet last night to discuss what to do about the fish, nicknamed the grumpy groper.

Possible solutions include moving it or even killing it.

But North Queensland Conservation Council coordinator James McLellan has urged patience.

"They should leave it alone for the time being," he said. "Relocat-

ing it is so problematic, because they're very territorial. Destroying it isn't an option, because the thing is 80 years old, and it has a perfect right to be there, because it's his ocean."

The groper is a newcomer to the wreck site, and in the past month has menaced several divers.

The worst attack was on New Year's Eve, when it put its giant mouth over the head of a Swedish diver before spitting him out.

The diver's mask was ripped off, and he was cut and scratched.

Other divers reported having their masks broken and being cut by the fish, which resembles a giant cod.

The Queensland groper is the world's largest reef-dwelling fish, and likes to take up residence in sunken ships.

AAP

ARTICLES FOR FATHOMS

Please don't be shy – we need your article, story or any item you think may be of interest to other club members!

Emergency Contact Information Mornington Peninsula Area

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Police – Ambulance – Fire | 000 |
| Rosebud Hospital 1527 Nepean hwy Rosebud | 5986 0666 |
| Frankston Hospital Hastings Road Frankston | 9784 7777 |
| The Bays Hospital Main Street Mornington | 5975 2009 |
| Mornington Bay Rescue Service | 0419 233 999 |
| Southern Peninsula Rescue | 5984 4555 |
| Diving Emergency Service | 1800 088 200 |
| Coast Guard (Hastings) | 5979 3322 |
| Coast Guard (Safety Beach) | 5981 4443 |
| State Emergency Service (SES) | 26 14 68 |
| Water Police | 9534 2983 |
| Melbourne Ambulance | 11440 |

Diving Doctors

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Dr Guy Williams (Rosebud) | 5981 1555 |
| Dr J De BJ Dade (Mornington) | 5975 5288 |

VHF Emergency Channel.....16