

FATHOMS

Special Edition May 2003

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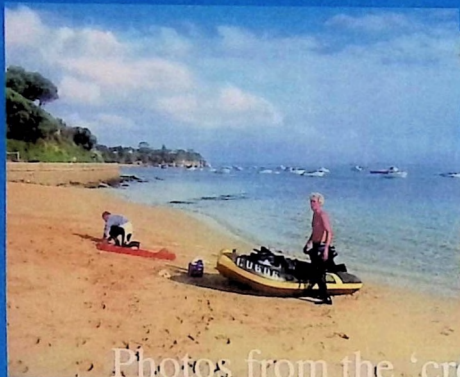
Photo courtesy Darren Pearce

Report on Leo's 'Pier to Pier' and the
VSAG Trip to West Australia

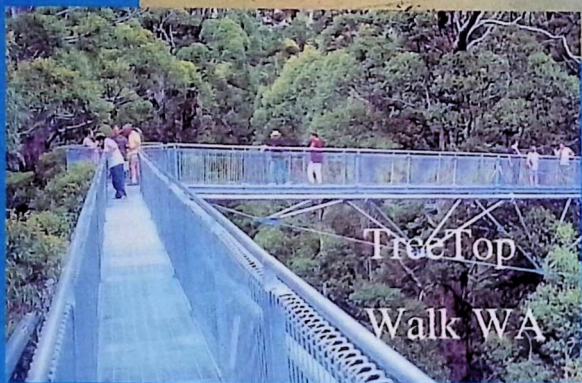
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Photos from the 'crossing'

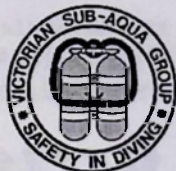


Tree Top
Walk WA

FATHOMS

Official Journal of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group

ACN 004 591 575



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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

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EDITORIAL

BY JOHN LAWLER

SPECIAL EDITION



Welcome to a very special edition of Fathoms. In this May issue we celebrate the Historic event of March this year when Leo Maybus dived into the history books by crossing Port Phillip Bay underwater from Portsea Pier to Queenscliff! Leo dedicated a lot of time, money and planning to achieve this mammoth feat.

Also in this edition, the stories of the VSAG dive and social trip to Western Australia. Twenty VSAG'ers and partners journeyed to Busselton, Albany - and beyond for Mary and Alan Beckhurst.

We hope you enjoy reading the stories of two major events in the history of our great club.

Finally, sincere thanks to all who contributed articles and to all who were involved in the bringing together of this special edition.



JOHN LAWLER

EDITOR

PLEASE NOTE: An article from Mary and Alan Beckhurst on their week after the WA trip called Bremer Bay to Esperance has been held over for the June/July edition of Fathoms.

LEO MAYBUS DIVES INTO THE HISTORY BOOKS.

“PIER TO PIER UNDERWATER CHALLENGE”

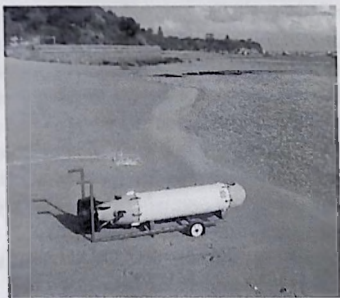
Story by John Lawler.

On Sunday March 23rd 2003, at approximately 2.30 pm, Leo Maybus surfaced at the Queenscliff Pier, having left the Portsea Pier three hours and five minutes earlier.

Leo had created history by being the first person to cross Port Phillip Bay underwater!

The story of this great achievement goes back to 1993 when Warwick McDonald and I, assisted by members of VSAG and Warwick's dive club, achieved 75% of the crossing before an unexpected storm and failed battery power ended our attempt.

Leo Maybus, a member of VSAG, took great interest in this attempt and from then the seed of another challenge was firmly planted in his mind. Leo had determined to himself that he would take on the challenge, but had different ideas as to how the journey would be undertaken.



Leo heard of a manufacturer in Melbourne that was making underwater scooters for the US hire market. Leo purchased two of these scooters, as his plan was to use two divers and two scooters as in the first attempt. Leo and Stuart Telford, of Telford Engineering, completed the battery fit out and the PVC welding. Leo carried out the rest of the modifications. The final all up cost of these units was around \$5000 each.

Over the ensuing years Leo used several divers in trials and as each of these trials were carried out it was becoming clear that it would not be in the best interest of the challenge to use two divers. At this point Leo decided to conduct the challenge on his own. The fact that some two years had been wasted in these trials had dampened his enthusiasm and the challenge went dormant for several years.

In 2000 Leo decided he was again ready to really put the Bay Challenge into place and new testing started. Underwater time and distance trials were carried out at Mornington, Sandringham, Black Rock, Ricketts Point and Half Moon Bay. Some of these underwater trial distances covered well over 5kms. Each of these trials required the help of several people on each occasion as the scooter, which weighed around 150kgs, needed four people just to carry it to the water. A support boat and crew were also necessary to follow the diver and for safety during these trials. On one occasion the diver and the boat became totally separated and Leo arrived unannounced at the Hampton Yacht Club and he needed to borrow a mobile phone to call his support crew.... they were at Black Rock!

As the count down to the year 2003 drew near, Leo had decided the challenge would work better if his direction was the different from the 1993 one. Leo planned to use the flood tide to take him North West and go around the North end of Popes Eye and then down to Queenscliff Pier on the ebb tide. It took a lot of convincing to change this plan but Leo finally decided that as the 1993 attempt was almost flawless, save for the unexpected, he would take the proven course which was to take the ebb tide from Portsea down towards the heads, cross the shipping channel during slack water and take the flood tide to Queenscliff. It was a very good decision as will be seen later in this story!⁴

Two final count down tests were yet to be carried and these were the reality ones. As a compass on this diver was of no use finding direction underwater due to the interference caused by the six batteries in the scooter unit, Leo had to be "led". A trailing system, the same used in 1993, was made up. This consisted of two lines running out approx 4 metres from the stern of a boat. These lines are attached to two buoys and from these buoys a weighted bar at 3 meters is suspended. Stretching back from the bar are coloured plastic streamers and a strobe light. It is this trailing line the diver would follow, his lifeline to success.

The first trial was carried out from Half Moon Bay. As the trial began, a strong Southerly wind came up making swells to around a meter. As the boat to be used in the challenge was 6.2 metres long and also high, it was being pushed away from the diver. Also, as the 175 hp motor was too high revving, we could not get the speed down to that of the scooter...we continually lost our diver! To see where the diver was behind the trailing line, a cord with a small buoy was attached to the diver but the initial one was far too long as we continually misjudged where the diver was. The trial day was very successful in that we had learnt many important lessons from the exercise. A lot of the systems would be changed as a result of this test dive. Clearly we had to find a 'rubber duck' boat with a very small motor to do this job! We also appreciated what to expect if the conditions were swelly...anything over one metre plus and the event would, most probably, not be possible!

The next (and final) trial day was carried out at Portsea on Saturday 15th March. A small 'rubber duck' boat had been found and the trial commenced with a set up of the boat at the Sorrento boat ramp. All the trailing equipment, fuel tank, radio and safety gear was positioned to suit the two-man team. The boat was motored around to the beach area south of the Portsea Pier.

The scooter was carried down the water, Leo was kitted up and the rubber duck moved out just beyond the end of the pier. Just as the diver picked up the trailing line our first disaster happened. The ferry had just berthed and with propeller in action the wash caught the diver and pushed him south into the boat mooring area. Moving in and out of the boats and the moorings caused several tangles, and eventually the diver had to surface!

Once out of this area the team set out again and then more trouble as the diver and boat became separated. Leo surfaced with news that the scooter alarm was sounding indicating that water had entered. It was decided to keep going but after twenty minutes the diver and scooter were intentionally beached. The Scooter was opened and inspected but only a small amount of water was present around the engine area. We decided to load the scooter onto the rubber boat and return to Portsea. Water absorbing material was placed inside the scooter and the alarm was disconnected. It was decided to re-run trial and the team set off again. Hard to imagine the picture of disbelief on our faces as the ferry came into the wharf again and we could see a repeat of the first effort, however the ferry berthed facing west this time and the wash was not a problem.

The boat and the diver developed a very steady pace and rhythm during this second trial and this continued all the way into the general area of the heads. It was this second and final run that led us all to believe that, once clear of the pier area, this challenge could be undertaken successfully.

The weather during the lead up to the big day had all very concerned as Melbourne was experiencing very bad weather. We suffered strong winds; several dust storms and rain -not the sort of weather required for a bay crossing! The forecast for Sunday was South Easterly winds 10 to 15 knots...also not good for the challenge, but when Sunday came the weather was simply perfect...flat seas and no wind....it surely must be an omen!

Sunday the 23rd March was definitely here!

TV reporter Matt Dowling called in to advise that the event was to be covered by Channel 9 and they were on the way to Portsea. ABC radio called in to advise that they wished to do a live to air interview with Leo.

The "Challenge" for the support crew began at Sorrento with the launch of the boats. The rubber duck



was prepared and set off for Portsea with **Robert Birtles** and **Craig Sutherland** in control. Five minutes into the trip trouble struck. The motor spluttered and stopped and in trying to restart, the pull cord broke off inside the cowling!

The tender boat "Signature One" found the rubber boat hanging off a mooring line about 1km from Sorrento and towed the boat around to the Portsea Pier. Work started on the motor and eventually it started again . . . it was however to stop a number of times during the day!

The CH9 team were exceptionally supportive of the attempt and stayed with the event all day, filming at Portsea, on the water during the run and at the very end on the beach at Queenscliff. The crossing was aired on the CH9 news that night.

CH9 interviews over with it was now down to the start time...rubber duck into position, scooter in the water, Leo kitted up and into the water for the brief swim out to the start position. The time is 11.25 am. The pick up was just perfect and the crossing was underway in the most perfect of weather conditions.

The first tangle occurred at 11.50 am and the back up diver, **Alan Storen**, already kitted up for such situations was quickly above the diver and together with the rubber duck crew had the lines freed and the dive resumed.

All was going very well however the crossing over the shipping channel had to be stalled as two ships were in the channel, one outbound and one inbound. The rubber boat started to enforce a very wide circular track near Point Nepean until the shipping had passed. The Lonsdale Lighthouse controller had been keeping us up to date on shipping movements and with only two ships in the channel, the main obstacle to the crossing was now over and with a clear, safe run ahead the channel crossing began at around 12.45 pm.

Whilst we believed we had judged the slack water time reasonably accurately, when the channel crossing began it was clear the tide was still ebbing and Leo was slowly heading towards the rip. The directive was to head due north into the flow and wait for slack water. The boat crew reported that they were in a holding situation but, to the relief of us all, this situation only lasted for a short period and as the slack became evident. The crossing took the new direction west towards Clarkes beacon and then at 1.20 pm the last turn north towards Queenscliff.

Around this time the calm flat conditions we had been experiencing started to change and the forecasted south easterly started to kick in. This resulted in the boat having to head northeast, as if the current course was maintained, the increasing wind would push the boat onto the shoreline below Shortland Bluff.

VSAG May Special Edition

It became a matter of small motor versus wind but the boat crew had the situation very well calculated and played the course to perfection clearing the land mass with plenty of good water in between.

The greatest sight I clearly recall on this day was coming around the point below the lighthouses and seeing the Queenscliff Jetty...at this point the excitement level was mounting as it was now becoming obvious that Leo was to going to complete the crossing...but it was not over yet by a long shot. The wind had picked up and, as the turn into the pier area started, the diver and boat became separated. The wind was playing havoc with the pick up but the two finally joined up. It was short lived and they became separated again. Another pick up and the end was now in sight.

The work of the rubber duck crew was now over as Leo had seen sand below and he headed into the shallowing water. Alan Storen dived in to call Leo up, but as Leo admitted later he was so tired he didn't recognise Alan.

At 2.30 pm Leo surfaced and struggled onto the beach north of the Queenscliff Pier to the justified applause of family, friends, CH9, crew and onlookers.

This was just the greatest moment to have been involved with all the people in this brilliant result.

Leo had just dived himself into the history books!



My dive across the bay - the view from below

By Leo Maybus

It started on March 23 2003 the plan was to go from Portsea Pier to Queenscliff Pier without surfacing. It started off ok, we met at Sorrento boat ramp at 8.30 am- it was a picture perfect day not a ripple on the water and the sun was shining, things were looking good and I thought the Gods were on our side.

John Lawler, Bruce Dart and Alan Storen had already launched Johns boat and were waiting- Joins boat being the main support boat. Craig Sutherland - the boat driver of the rubber boat got a lift down with me and we had the rubber boat on the roof rack on the ute. We met up with Robert Birtels and Priya Cardinaletti on the way down with Priya complaining about having to get up so early; but being on time for something has to be a first, well done Rob!

We unloaded the rubber boat off the ute and put the motor, fuel tank and safety equipment in to it. Rob and Craig put their wet suites on and were now ready to take the boat to Portsea Pier. They left first followed shortly by John. I then drove to Portsea and was able to drive right down to the pier, meeting more club members and friends all willing to give a hand with my diving gear and most importantly the underwater scooter that had purposely been modified for trip. It was 1.8 meters long and weighed in excess of 150 kilograms with six 12 volt deep cycle batteries. Some volunteers helped to carry the scooter to the waters edge.

In the meantime John had contacted the supporters on the pier and asked where the rubber boat was. As they had not seen it, John went back towards Sorrento to find Robert and Craig hanging off a mooring line, not being able to restart the motor after it had stalled and having broken the pull cord when trying to restart the motor. . . John towed them to Portsea where we set about trying to fix the motor. We borrowed some tools and after pulling cowling and recoil mechanism off the motor we managed to get it started, not a pretty sight but it would have to do!

In the mean time Big Mick and Annie had turned up with Ted and Jan Cornish and Neville Viapree on his boat followed shortly after by my brother Peter in his boat. Channel 9 news reporter Mat Dowling and his cameraman had come from Melbourne to interview us and get some news footage. After the interview it was suggested they could use Peters boat for on-water reporting. Time was getting away and having all the diving gear at the waters edge it was time to get ready. There was an air of excitement as I had some last minute photos taken with Andrew and Lauren by Priya and Darren.

Andrew, Darren and Peter helped getting my twin 120 cu ft tanks on my back (God those are heavy!); check air was on and secure the divers buoy to me so, in the event I do get separated from the trailing line from the rubber boat, I can be located easily. The plan is for me to follow the trailing line suspended from two buoys

towed behind the rubber boat at a depth of three meters - the hard work of navigation and negotiating shipping being done by Robert and Craig.

Its time to go, Craig gets the motor started and Robert stands at the bow holding on to a rope for support, as it is easier to navigate and keep an eye on me standing up. The plan is for the rubber boat and myself to meet at the end of the pier, travel down towards the Heads area, change direction towards Clarkes beacon, situated approximately half way between Pt Lonsdale lighthouse and Shortland Bluff and, after crossing the shipping channel I change course again towards Shortland Bluff and finally the last leg of the journey to Queenscliff Pier.

It seemed to take forever waiting for Robert and Craig to get into position at the end of the pier! A last drink of water from JL; farewells to the spectators, news crew and an ok signal to the rubber boat and support craft and I'm away, heading out past the three or so dive schools in the water to our rendezvous position at the end of the Pier and a perfect meeting up with the rubber boat. We are finally on our way!

As we make our way down towards the Heads I start to do my checks, air -both tanks, batteries, no obvious leaks in the scooter - so far so good! Settling to a nice breathing pattern I look at my computer 30 minutes dive time, check my air, ok . . . look back - No trailing line!! . . . umm! . . . not to worry we had our contingency plan in place for just such emergencies. I would keep going as straight as I could and the rubber boat would do a loop and come into meet me on my port side and we would continue on as if nothing had happened, arrrr! perfect just as we practiced many times before, but that's not quite what happening. My buoy line is caught; the motor on the rubber boat has stopped . . . something's caught! They are trying to untangle me. There's Alan Storen my back up diver - he has been called from Johns boat to deal with just such emergencies, stay calm! Alan got me clear in a couple of seconds - it seemed like minutes. That wasn't planned but were off again. Everything running fine now ...15 minutes later, 20 minutes, 30 minutes. . . there is not much to see when your diving mid water, keep an eye out for Jelly Fish - some get quite big this time of year . . .40 minutes, a school of bait fish . . . some dark shadows of kelp and sea weed have come into view, then some reef and reef fish, we must be getting close to Heads area and changing our course towards Clarkes beacon . . . that's strange we are going left instead of right, there must be shipping coming or going through the Heads. Our plan was that, in the event of shipping, we would do a circle in Quarantine Bay until it was safe to cross over. That's strange we are heading back against the tide must be to stall a bit longer for shipping . . .Ok . . . we are off again, lost sight of the bottom we must be starting to cross the channel now as I can feel the swells coming down the channel from the Heads. I can now see shadows below me, we must be across the channel . . . that's a good feeling, the kelps not moving, it's still slack water, I wonder where we are? The tide is starting to run now but the visibility is starting to decline and I can feel a slight wave action from the surface. I'm now starting to have trouble keeping up

with the boat and visibility is getting really bad. I don't know what's happening, I can't seem to keep up with the boat . . . we keep getting separated. It's getting shallower and shallower visibility is down to about two meters now . . . I keep losing the boat and the surface chop is making it difficult, it's getting shallow, 1.8 meters I've lost the boat now and I'm not sure which direction to go, maybe they have run out of fuel? I will wait a few minutes. What! There's a diver out here! What's he doing here, he's signaling me to go up . . . I've made it!! When I surfaced I was a bit disoriented, I took my bearings and made for the shore where Robert and Craig were there to help me get the scooter out of the water.

In the mean time Alan had managed to swim in to shore to congratulate me for my effort. It was a truly humbling moment for me as I came out of water being greeted with rousing cheers and applause from everyone, especially from the members and friends who had traveled from Melbourne and as far away as Warnambool to share in this historic event.

I owe a special thanks to:

The SUPPORT TEAMS

The "Rubber Duck"

Crew: Robert Birtles: Navigator

Craig Sutherland: Operator

[Whilst all the support teams were important to the day, it must be recognised that this crew was central to the successful end result . . . their patient, calm and intelligent approach to keeping Leo on track was simply outstanding.]

"Signature One" Main tender and operations vessel.

Crew: John Lawler: Head of Operations.

Alan Storen: Back up Diver

Bruce Dart: Navigation and Timing

Chris Storen: Deckie and Observer

"Savage Swordfish"

Crew: Peter Maybus: Back up Tender Boat Operator.

Andrew Maybus: Deckie and Assistant

Matt and John: TV Ch 9 Film Crew

Priya Cardinaltti: Assistant.

"Haines Hunter"

Crew: Mick Jeacle: Navigation and Tidal Advisor.

Annie Jeacle: Assistant

Ted Cornish: Assistant

Jan Cornish: Assistant

Nev Viapree. Assistant

The Queenscliff "WELCOMING CREW"

*Helen Fryday and her Mother
Ian Lagine
Kate Cain
Thersa (Leo's sister) and Ken Smith(Travelled from Warranbool)
Josie Mare and John Feeley at Sorrento
Gerry DeVries and family*

The SPONSORS

An event as big as this doesn't go ahead without the support of friends and sponsors.

A special "thank you" from Leo to the following:

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WETSUITSALLWOODS BREATHING SERVICES (Robin Woods)

CREST BUILDERS (Peter Vleugel)

DAMWELD ENGINEERING (Gerry Dammer)

DeVRIES BUILDERS (Gerry and Robert DeVries)

DES WILLIAMS

R&J STUBBIES (Bob Scott)

NATIONAL EQUESTRIAN WHOLESALERS (Chris Llewellyn)

TEKFORD ENGINEERING

CORDAGE BROKERS (Rob Birtles)

JOHN LAWLER.

FAMILY MEMBERS

VSAG MEMBERS

*A very special "thank you" to **John White** for making his Rubber Duck available for the final trials and the crossing and **John Lawler**, for liaising with media, water police, parks Victoria, ports and harbors authority and his unshakable enthusiasm
If for some reason we have missed out on thanking someone and you know who you are, thank you very much.*

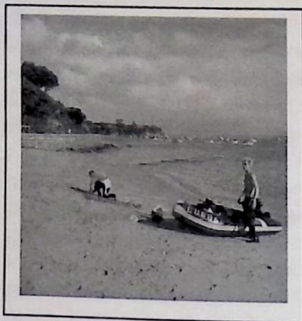
BAY CROSSING - SUPPORT CREW

Robert Birtles and Craig Sutherland

This article is from the support crew's point of view, being was one of total focus on minute by minute happenings - as you will conclude.

On the morning of Leo's adventure, the deckies (as we'll now call them), were dropped off at the Sorrento boat ramp. There Leo, Craig, and myself prepared the rubber duck for a journey it wasn't really built for. I mean it could barely handle

two people, not taking into account the repaired air leak that in part, still was a leak.



Regardless, we launched and started off for the Portsea pier with as much enthusiasm as one could muster - due to the duck's past and negative history during earlier sea trails. Not to be out done this time around, the engine threw a tantrum then gave up at about the half way mark, leaving Craig and I wondering how we managed to be comed into this situation.

Our (or rather Craig's) efforts to restart the engine lead to a broken starter cord thus all hope of powering our way out of

this mess evaporated. The spare cord (the one I was meant to bring as a spare) lay in the home shed. Like, I'm in the rope industry and have hundreds of meters of starter cord lying about, and when you need two lousy metres, visions of unused and enormous meterage appear. Leo is blamed for this. He forgot to remind me.

However we were drifting in the right direction thus hope for rescue was reasonable. Radio requests for help weren't initially received, but in the end JL picked up our desperate cries. During this lonely, dark and marooned period of time Craig managed to paddled our way to an anchored Couta boat, then tied up awaiting for pick up - rescue really. Yes Craig - not me did the paddling. I was there purely as an administrator. In other words he was the deckie's deckie.

JL eventually conducted the pick up and proceeded to the South side of the Portsea pier. The bad news was given to Leo who was at this stage, totally engrossed in all the attention he was receiving. Like he was just loving it. He was practising that cuddly Jellystone Park Bear grin for the camera, and was on top of the world - for the moment any way.

No replacement cord could be found so Leo took control and ordered the engine to be uncloused, hopefully enabling the broken cord to be refitted in some way. Result - no way! However if the engine cover was left off (not to mention the bits we couldn't replace) the engine could be turned over - but why wouldn't it start?? We actually found out - several weeks later. The wrong fuel mixture was used. Don't look at me, I was there as the administer of boat functions, not equipment. Remember?. Sounds a bit weak??

Eventually, and after many doubtful moments (as we couldn't see this engine performing) Craig, through total aggression (due to his age and a hang over) got the duck into action even though it sounded like Leo most mornings.

Leo was gearing up (hard effort as Priya was pushing him around) and was ready to go. He commenced unescorted to the end of the pier, whereby the duck cruised past him with the submerged road barrier marker.

At this moment let me point out the Duck's equipment and function. The duck was there purely for navigational purposes. Maybe it could have carried out emergency functions but this was at a price, and Leo was not in agreement. Stuff him.

The Duck had an engineer (Craig). His roll was to pull the starter cord, maintain the revs, then steer the bloody thing. To give him some level of support and guidance, and through today's flat management / supportive employee's practises (like do it now Craig - don't argue Craig - now !!!), I was included to act as Leo's spotter thus ensuring he was within visual distance of the under water marker, and remaining in one piece.

We had spare fuel (not the right mixture), radio, normal marine safety gear, under water marker (now in the water), and a pump to replace lost pressure. All very re assuring.

What more could you want - we were beginning to feel comfortable until the tourists (VSAG) cruised by stuffing faces with chicken sandwiches washed down by larger and wine. Like they even had the right glasses.

Craig and myself, who were so committed to Leo's success, forgot our own sustenance that could easily have been overcome by some foresighted and generous tourist (VSAG again). No - it didn't happen. Anyway and by now, Craig and I had the shits on, thus would have refused all offerings.

Maybe 35 minutes into the journey Leo was starting to veer to the starboard thus would lose sight of the marker. Our efforts to correct his course lead to our one and only hook up. Leo had become entangled in the trawl line, which had the potential to end his venture.

The duck cut power (which was almost idle anyway) and tried to raise Leo to a level so we could access the scene. Leo wasn't wearing this, as any break of the water would have disqualified him. At this point, Craig wanted to dive in but Alan was recruited to roll over from JL's boat, make way to Leo and untangle the trawl line, which I think was around his tanks. Full marks to Alan as he didn't miss a

beat. All over in seconds and Leo was on his way. Sorry Craig - your moment was taken from you. I needed you in the duck to pull the starter cord. - Deckie!

As the weather and tidal conditions were all on our side, it was quick and easy for the navigator to maintain visual contact with Leo, then reach the point where we planned to conduct a right hand turn and head across the bay. At this point, two container vessels were directly opposite and about to pass side by side. Like you couldn't ask for worse. No way could we proceed except for moving a little further towards the channel then going into a circular holding pattern. At this point the engine had only died 2 - 3 times. Craig to immediate and successful action each time.

After about half an hour we broke pattern and headed across the bay. So that Leo could keep with us, the Duck's engine was required to be just above idle, having the effect of allowing the tide (still slightly running) to take us to some degree - therefore our direction was more towards the Lonsdale Lighthouse. - not good!

As luck or good planning would have it, the tide stopped which allowed us to proceed in the direction we required (maybe a bit too far up the bay), then navigational hazards such as Dive Charter boats and their drift/marker lines (who were targeting the slack water) caused some concern. Imagine if Leo became entangled in that lot. Craig managed to avoid these obstacles and reach the other side, then turned towards the home run. This was a great effort on Craig's behalf, as he didn't have the speed required to fight the tide or maintain our desired directions. In other words we weren't in total control. Not to mention the motor dying several times during this critical time.

Up until now, the water had been smooth and clear. It was relatively easily to maintain visual contact with Leo. This was all about to change as the wind came up thus the water wasn't so clear. Much guess work and persistence kept us in touch with Leo, even though there was a tendency for him to veer off.

Towards the end, visibility was near on impossible. After talking to Leo (trips end) he was experiencing the same problem. Several times we lost each other but reconnected after circling his surface float which by the way was one of the most useful pieces of equipment he had. Not to forget air etc, but without this float, our maintaining contact through the whole journey would have been impossible.

At trips end, one could only admire Leo for his tremendous effort, his sheer tenacity and belief in himself which got him to the start point after many eventful trials, then commenced what must have been a lonely venture with much time to think about

friendly and not so friendly fish, whether or not he was imitating a popular lure, and what else constantly goes through Leo's mind.

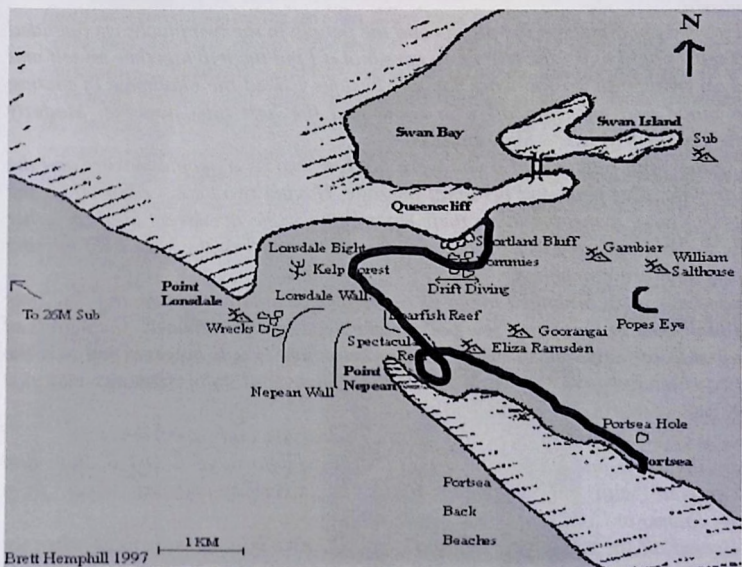
The duck beached before Leo so we were there waiting. What a showman. He was trying to act in a casual manner, but later discussion proved he was grandstanding. This was his moment, and he was capitalising on every bit.

After his well-deserved interview, congratulatory kisses from present females; it was time to pack up by loading the torpedo and other gear onto Peter's (his brother) boat, and head back to Sorrento towing the Duck behind. Now this became the deckies moment as we consumed the remains of Pete's sangers.

Leo's real prize was yet to come. On returning, he and Andrew were met with parking infringement notices that in light of the day, wasn't on.

From the Deckies Leo, well done, a top effort for a man of your advancing years. We certainly took this into account when setting the engine speed.

Robert/Craig



Approximate path – distance about 13km

Western Australia Dive Trip

John Lawler.

My first introduction to the West began in November 2000, when I ventured to Albany to work briefly as a volunteer in the final stages of the preparation of the sinking of the former HMAS Perth. It was truly an unforgettable experience. I returned to the West again a year later and dived the former HMAS Swan at Busselton with John Jennings and the crew from the Naturaliste Diving Academy, before again ending up with the wonderful folk at the Albany Scuba Diving Academy.

Thinking about the great diving, the wonderful towns and sights and the never-ending hospitality I had experienced over the two trips, I decided to share these experiences with my friends and dive buddies from VSAG. I decided to arrange a dive trip and announced the plan to go ahead in March 2003. Whilst I expected a small number to respond I was rewarded with no fewer than twenty takers for the trip...fantastic.

As I had a very good feel for the places and the people in the two places we intended to visit, I felt I could make the trip more personal if I put the trip together myself and not used an agency to do the work for us...besides I liked the challenge of putting this into place and ensuring all who came had the best time possible. Modesty allows me say the trip was a huge success.

Two 12 seater mini busses and a van were booked, two as a people movers and the van to carry the dive gear and personal luggage. Having two busses allowed for the non divers to have transport to do their sightseeing while the divers used the other van. This worked out very well, except for the one time when the keys went missing leaving the land crew stranded.

Plane schedules were arranged to get us to the first destination in time to relax after the long haul, just in time for a few pots before heading off to dinner. The details of the social side are covered in other articles submitted. I will however say that the hospitality extended to us by Alan and Debi Coyne and John Jennings was just brilliant...we were treated a bit like family.

Thanks to you all at Busselton for your wonderful service and your friendship. At Albany the crew had no sooner arrived at our comfortable B and B, than Ron Moore arrived with the shipment of pre-arranged/pre-ordered wines from Goundrys, thanks to Cate Finlay.

Ron collected all the scuba gear and it was on the dive boat already to go when we arrived next morning. Ron was exceptional in arranging the restaurants for us and the Thai Restaurant was just sensational.

Nothing was too much trouble for Ron and his team and the stay at Albany was made so much the better by the personal attention we were given by Ron, his diver masters and the great crew on the Silver Star...thanks Paul and Nathan.

Cate Finlay was at her professional best in giving us her personal tour of the wonderful Goundry winery at Mt. Barker and we also had the pleasure of her company socially, when time away from the winery allowed, which was full on with harvest time...thanks Catie, you were great.

The final night was a great hoot and we ended our stay in Albany with a big BBQ at Ron's home. The wine flowed as did the amber fluid and it was all onto the dance floor as we rocked into our last night in this great city. I was touched and humbled by a presentation from Mick Jeacle, on behalf of the VSAG'ers, as an appreciation for putting the trip together; thanks to you all. Thanks to you Ron and Nathan for looking after us so well - .your efforts were appreciated.

Sunday morning and we are away early, collect Ron for the final photo shot outside the dive shop, and we are off to Perth with Ron along with us to visit his wife Shirley recovering in hospital.

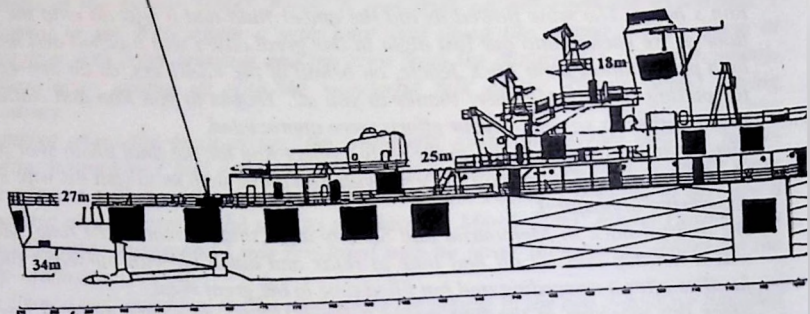
We arrived back in Melbourne late Sunday night, but no matter the time, Monday was a holiday and we all had time to relax and catch up with ourselves and our families after a rewarding and fun filled time in the great West.

Since this was one of the first major " local " VSAG dive trips away, it has been interesting to hear some of the feedback relative to "diving locally" as distinct from overseas. There is now some suggestions that we could do more diving at home and the wrecks up North could be dived. Sometime this year or early next we will have the opportunity to dive on the former HMAS Brisbane which will be sunk just North of..well...Brisbane!

VSAG has made many trips to far way Port Lincoln, Streaky Bay, the East Coast dive spots and Tasmania as part of the Christmas away dives, so we are used to travelling to enjoy our diving.

Maybe someone will be motivated to take our club to some new dive sites within Australia as a dive and social trip...it's quite easy to do...I know because it has just been done.





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ALBANY

DISCOVERY

BY THE SEA



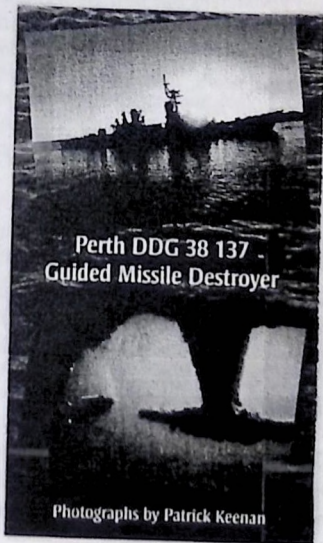
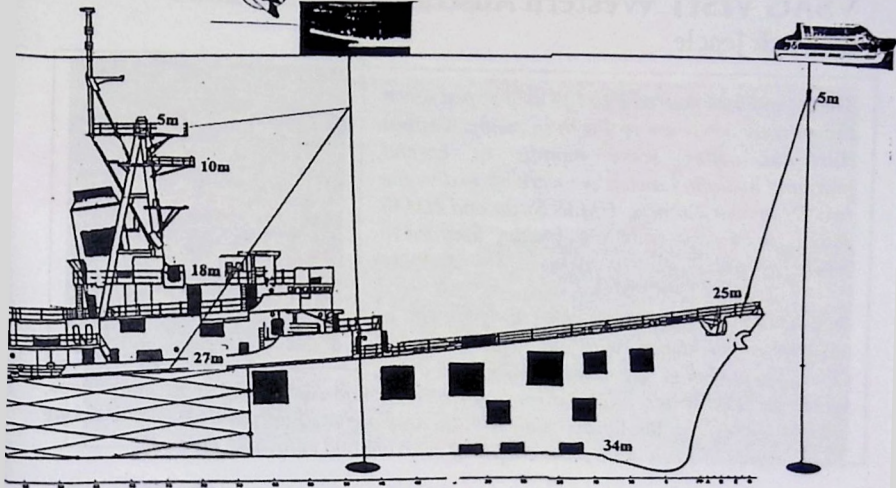
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Perth DDG 38 137 -
Guided Missile Destroyer

Photographs by Patrick Keenan

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Photo by Patrick Keenan

VSAG VISIT Western Australia – March 2003

By Mick Jeacle

The jet engines roared into life as we sped down the runway, en route to Perth in sunny Western Australia. After some months of careful planning by John Lawler, we were off to dive the two Destroyer Escorts, HMAS Swan and HMAS Perth, and I must say I was looking forward to doing just that.

In a little over 4 hours we touched down, and in no time at all met up with others who traveled on different flights. Gear was loaded into a one tonne van and twenty VSAG divers and partners boarded two 20 seater mini buses, and we set off for Busselton, some 2 ½ hours south of Perth, but not before taking in the sights of Fremantle for a couple of relaxing and enjoyable hours.



Busselton is a lovely little town situated on a fabulous bit of coastline. It is a thriving community steeped in history, the most fascinating of which is the old wooden jetty which extends some two kilometers out into Geographe Bay. The first stage of this jetty was built in 1865, with further extensions due to the shallowness of the water made right up until 1965. Abandoned by the Government in 1972, and damaged by fire and cyclones through the years, it is now cared for by a local jetty preservation society, which charges a small fee for visitors to stroll its length, with these funds contributing to the ongoing upkeep. Well worth a dive. For those who are interested in learning more about the history of this jetty, and in viewing live web cam pictures of the underwater flora, visit

www.watercorporation.com.au/marinecam/index.cfm

After settling into the motel, it was off to the nearest pub for the desperates for a quick 10 pots (this to become the saying of yours truly for the rest of the trip) where we met up with Cape Naturaliste dive shop proprietor Alan Coyne, and John Jennings who assisted as a Divemaster during our stay. The next morning we all visited the dive shop situated just around the corner from our motel, where we filled out the necessary paper work and were soon on our way down to a very nice little beach near Dunsborough. This was to be the pick up point where Alan would manoeuvre his boat close into shore for us divers to board his boat for the short trip out to the wreck site. As there were 13 divers, we had to dive in two shifts, but this was not a problem as it was a very nice place to be.



HMAS SWAN

Built : Naval Dockyard – Williamstown Vic.

Launched: 16 December, 1967

Length: Approximately 113 metres.

Displacement: 2,700 tons.

Commissioned: By Royal Australian Navy – January, 1970.

Decommissioned: September, 1996.

Scuttled: December, 1997.

The wreck of the HMAS Swan lies in 31 metres of water, approximately 1.3 nautical miles off Cape Naturaliste. This is an idyllic location as it is protected from most winds, and from what I am told the days one can't dive the wreck due to bad weather are few and far between.

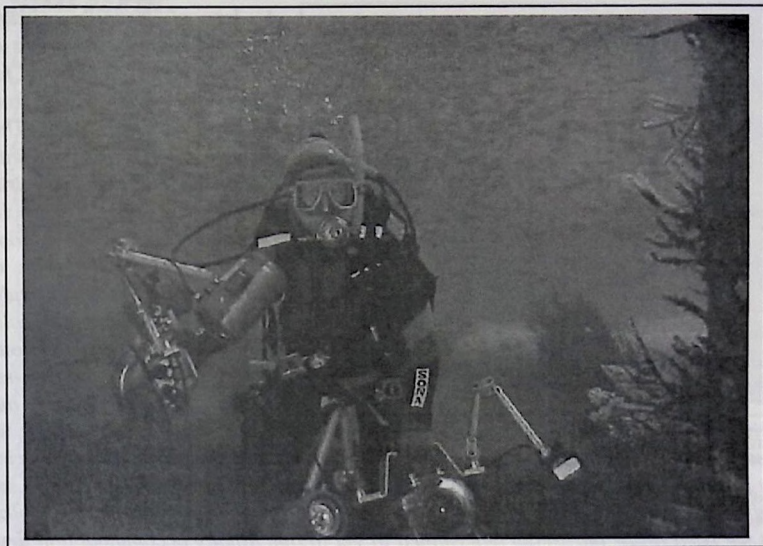
Alan tied up to his mooring buoy and gave us free reign to do our own thing, which suited me down to the ground. We wasted no time in kitting up and were soon in the water. A short swim to the main marker buoy saw us directly over the mast of the ship, which we descended and made our way towards the stern. Here we swam down underneath the stern to where the propellers would have been to catch a glimpse of the fish life, including a very large flathead which has called this area home. My computer indicated a depth of 107 feet at this spot which is the deepest part of the wreck.

From there we then swam into the large cut out in the stern and entered a large passageway that continued for the greater part of the ship, with rooms leading off to both sides. Looking along this passage it soon became evident that one can always see a light source ahead, courtesy of the many cut out sections in the hull for diver safety. It also became evident that there was an upper and lower deck to explore. The first room I encountered must have been the laundry as it contained a huge washing machine and dryer, and what appeared to be an ironing press. Further we went, past a row of toilets, and inspecting many other rooms along the way. We soon reached what appeared to be the operations room with various items of equipment still in place.

We exited the wreck and swam to the bow area, dropping down from the deck to inspect the pointy end from a short distance. A very impressive sight, and I found myself wishing we had one of these just outside the Heads. Then back to the Bridge where, peering from outside through the row of windows we encountered Alan & Mary Beckhurst having a wonderful time inside, busily photographing in both stills and video. We entered the bridge from the starboard side, not realizing at the time that you could also do so via the roof. Here the navigator 's chair, binnacle and various items of electronic equipment still reside. My favourite was the one-man porcelain urinal just outside the rear of the bridge area, and I'm surprised it is still there.

We were to have three more dives on the Swan, and we probably missed a lot as we didn't really know what to look for. However, it was agreed by all to be really easy diving, and with very little silting throughout the inside of the wreck, the visibility was very good. Decompression stops were spent on the mast, where we enjoyed the company of many large batfish as we watched Mary roll off yet another film on all the little bits that I would never think to look for.

After the first Swan Dive, the second party stayed on board and we returned to the Busselton Jetty for a dive. Now I'm not big on pier dives, but it is a long way from home and I was informed that it was a must. So in I went and yes I was surprised at the soft coral growth and the color on the pylons that I stayed for at least 20 minutes. Mary and Alan went down with their full armoury of photographic gear, and simply left the entire assortment on the sea floor, swapping and changing as they desired. Sure was a funny sight to see divers not in our group scratching their heads as they swam past S'000's of camera equipment left unattended.



On Monday evening, we were invited to Alan & Debbie Coyne's home for a BBQ. This was a great night, with our hosts providing enough meat and sausages and salads to feed a regiment. Alan has this huge garage which contains everything from stereo to Billiards Table, but I was most intrigued to see him light the BBQ smack in the middle of the room. Without any flu system, save for a round hole cut into the roof lining, the smoke from burning fat was immense, but Alan accepted this as normal course. Not to mention the fiercely burning drip tray which was hastily carried out to burn harmlessly on the back lawn.

The night was a fitting end to a wonderful 2 days spent in Busselton. Our hosts, Debbie & Alan were exceptional and one got the feeling that we had known them, and them us, for much longer. I am sure they were sad to see us go. Thanks folks; I am sure I will return one day in the not too distant future.

On Tuesday morning, after the usual fully cooked breakfast, we were once again aboard the buses and on our way to Albany, following the scenic route. I can't recall the how many kilometers it was to Albany but I seem to remember a time of some 4 ½ hours was estimated to travel the distance. At least it would have taken that long, if Ross Luxford had not insisted we engage in a lot of tree hugging along the way. You had to be there.



A lot of friendly rivalry emerged between the crews of the two buses; jockeying for position to be first away from the various stops etc. This seemed to work just fine, until we visited our last giant tree somewhere past Walpole. Llewey had not long previously taken the reins of our vehicle from yours truly, and had positioned it ideally pointing towards the road out. Only trouble was, when exiting with the other bus

(driven by Ted Cornish) fair up our clacker, he turned into the road the way we came in, which just happened to be One Way. The noise in the cabin as we all cried out in unison was deafening, and I turned towards the other bus just in time to see Ted's laughing dial as he jumped us real good. Well, we never did recover folks, but we sped off at full steam determined to get to our Albany accommodation first. When we did arrive, there were the other bastards dancing around out the front, having taken some bloody short cut with the benefit of a fair dinkum map.

The accommodation here was a delightful little Guest House called "Discovery by the Sea." It is run by John & Elizabeth Roberts on behalf of their son. Following the room allocation, it was off to the Esplanade Hotel "for a quick 10 pots," and this was to be the main drinking hole for the rest of the stay.

The first night we made it back to the Guest House fairly early, and were all surprised to find that Manager John enjoyed a good old sing song. Of course, I too didn't need much persuasion to join in, and we raised the roof for an hour or two. We found out that John has sung in choirs and in various musicals, and the fact that he had never taken singing lessons seemed quite incredible. He was a natural.

In the early part of that first evening, Ron Moore from Albany Scuba Diving Academy called around to meet us and advise details of the next day's diving on the HMAS Perth.

Due to our number of divers (13) exceeding the capabilities of his boat, he advised we were booked on the Silver Star, a large 50 foot catamaran with deck space that had to be seen to be believed. Owned & operated by Paul Guest, it was a very comfortable dive platform indeed, made even more comfortable by hot cups of tea or coffee, biscuits, lunch etc., and being waited on by Ron's son. (sorry mate, can't recall your name.)

HMAS PERTH

Laid Down: 21 September, 1962 at Michigan USA.

Launched: 26 September, 1963

Length: 133.2 metres

Displacement: 4,900 tonnes

Commissioned by RAN: 17 July, 1965 at Boston, USA

Decommissioned: 15 October, 1999

Scuttled: 28 November, 2001 – King George Sound, Albany WA.

The Perth was a Guided Missile Destroyer, and one of the last steam powered ships to serve with the Royal Australian Navy. She steamed over one million nautical miles during her career spanning 34 years, and saw active duty in Vietnam along with sister ships HMAS Brisbane and HMAS Hobart. The Hobart was scuttled South of Adelaide late last year, and the Brisbane is destined to be scuttled somewhere off the Sunshine Coast in Queensland at a date yet to be fixed.

The Perth sits perfectly upright in around 38 metres of water, about 500 metres from Seal Island, in King George Sound.

Two dives on the wreck were scheduled for the Wednesday, and after allocating our own buddies we were soon over the side. It was here that disappointment set in as the visibility appeared to be no greater than about 5 metres. This was confirmed when we commenced our descent down the mast, with the water taking on a cloudy green colour. I couldn't help but think of Mary's earlier complaints about the floating matter at the Swan site, and how it would spoil her pictures. Compared to this, the vis there was great.

Oh well, perhaps we arrived on a bad day, but I suspect that the wreck has been placed in the wrong spot, made evident by the amount of silt throughout the ship already. I would liken it to sinking a wreck in the middle of Port Phillip Bay, which I am sure would never happen.

The dive itself was still enjoyable, don't get me wrong. Like the Swan there are holes cut all along the side of the ship, as well as inside, to ensure that those wishing to penetrate the wreck can safely do so. There are many rooms to swim through, but without an intimate knowledge of the ship these were impossible to identify. Clouded silt was a major problem when following other diver/s so I spent my time endeavouring to go where no other diver had been during that dive. This seemed to work for a while but me ol' mate Ted couldn't keep up and I invariably lost him along the way.

Much of the same for the second dive after a nice lunch. I noticed Mary and Alan left their cameras topside for that dive.

It was then back to camp and off again for a quick 10 pots for yours truly, and about 5 for Lewey. For some reason he was making me drink 2 to his one, and I never could fathom why!

The next day saw us heading out to the outer islands of Michaelmas & Breaksea, which from afar resembled our own Wilsons Prom. The water here was as expected, nice and clear and refreshed by the ocean currents. A nice white sandy bottom and good fish life to be seen everywhere. This would have been the ideal location for the Perth but apparently it was vetoed by the Harbour Master, no doubt a non diver. Most of our divers elected to dive one of the old whale Chasers, the Cheynes 111 (Or was it Cheynes 11) I found out later that it was apparently a great dive, and I regret not diving it now. Oh well, I got to see more of the underwater scenery which was very much like the Prom.

The next day, the non divers elected to come out for the trip as there was plenty of room on board the Silver Star. Unfortunately the weather had deteriorated somewhat which made for a fairly bumpy trip out to Michaelmas. In a boat like this it doesn't matter, it was just a bit hard to walk in a straight line.

Diving was much of the same and very relaxing, although we did swim a long way. In between, we visited the Chinese Restaurant (basic fare) and the Italian Restaurant (much better) and finally the Thai Restaurant, which was excellent.

The next day we visited Goundry winery and the Sandalwood factory for lunch, and purchase of some goodies to take home to the dearly beloved- who was left at home to cater for the whims of the two unmarried daughters and the dog. That evening we again experienced the best of WA hospitality when we were invited to a BBQ at Ron Moore's house. We all took along some meat and grog, with Ron generously providing everything else, including the cooking prowess of his son, who did a great job at the hot plate.

I took the opportunity of presenting John Lawler with a small token of everybody's appreciation for a job well done. As mentioned, it would have been very easy for John to pull out of the trip when he found out he would not be able to dive, but not so. He was in everything from helping with tanks and weight belts, to organizing restaurants and wines. The non divers were well catered for with their own vehicle and chauffeur in Bob Scott, to whisk them away to their desired destinations.

All in all, a very enjoyable trip in good company. We should do more of these in future. What about the SS Yongala eh Andrea?

WA. AND A BUS **BOB & JUNE SCOTT**

I won't go into all the usual dribble like I woke Saturday morning had breaky picked up Niffy, Geoff, around 8am loaded up the truck with all the luggage diving gear etc. I must say this is the first time that we have flown since the Airlines have introduced computerised ticketing systems - isn't a big improvement? This trip must have been one of the most orderly trips that we have had as a group en mass All the participants sort of made their own way there and it sort of just happened. Or maybe I was just more relaxed this trip.

When we arrived in Perth J.L. had pre-arranged all the transport for us two 12 seater buses and a van to carry all the luggage and dive gear. Perth greeted us with a fairly warm day so it was decided that we would head off to Fremantle for a quick stop over. We broke into 2 parties - blokes to the Wharf to look at the boats and cool beer, women to the shops - sounds pretty normal to me

An hour or so later we climbed back on to the buses and headed south towards Busselton. We travelled along the coast some of the way and I was amazed at the amount of land reclaiming that is going on, the huge canal systems they are putting in and the huge industrial estates with gigantic factories they are building to cater for ship building industry. It is obvious that there are big bucks being spent over there.

About half way between Perth and Busselton it was time to water at a fence and take on coffee, tea, and lolly water etc. We arrived at Busselton late in the afternoon- weary, sweaty, hungry, and ready for bed, but considering the distance that we had travelled and the time that we were on the go and the heat it was a very good trip and I think that everybody pulled up ok. Our accommodation at the Paradise Holiday Motel was not 5 star, but clean, comfortable and the staff were very friendly and obliging and breakfast was great and plentiful.

From this point on not being able to dive any more I put on my very best skirt and joined the ladies group (June, Chris, Jan, Marie, and yours truly), commandeered a bus and took in the sights. Looked at the longest jetty in Australia (some walked it - June and I didn't - run out of time) We all paddled our feet in the Atlantic & Southern oceans, visited the Cape Naturaliste Light house on the southern point of W.A. marvelled at how white the sand was and the clarity and blueness of the water. Bumbury- now that is a nice spot great beaches with houses right on the water front. While we were there we wandered around the Sunday market (I think it was Sunday) eyed the art/craft and Hippy's playing their bongo drums - they said we could join in for \$10 each needless to say we declined their offer. We toured all round Margaret river saw things like the Lilac Farm, Cheese factory, Simmo's ice creams, Fudge factory, & Yogurt (for Marie's Bazza) and of course a couple of

winery's for the odd sip or two, but being the designated driver I missed out (true) John & Debbie from the Busselton Dive Shop made us very welcome and on the last night there they had Bar-B-Q for us, there was heaps of food and booze even tried his home brew not bad, (but not as good as yours Mick and I better say... and Ted's) I may have left a visit or two out, but the girls had me in a spin, what with left here Bobby, right here Bobby, stop here... opps too far go back, I'm not sure what I saw in the finish. But seriously I did have a good time.

The next day we were off to Albany with stop offs at the Giant Tingle Tree and the Valley of the Giants and a walk in the trees too. I'm not big in things that are that high above ground I can tell you, 40mts. under sure doesn't feel as scary as 40 mts. above, so it was a quick trip for me. Back on buses the call from the troops - "no more trees, please", It's nearly beer time. If you think that was the last of the dramas we are in the middle of nowhere and the big lloyd informs us the "Bloody bus is running on red line I'll have to turn off the air conditioning" with about 120kms to go not very funny especially when you're the last car in the convoy and there's no mobile phone signal to boot. Anyway we made it to the next fuel stop and refreshments.

We arrived at our next home late in the afternoon - our new hosts John & Elizabeth were there to greet us and allocate us to our rooms to unload our baggage Ron Moore from Albany Scuba made himself known, outlined the activities for the divers made suggestions on where to eat etc. But like the first leg of the trip I put on my shirt and let the ladies lead me around I might add without their combined efforts in navigation I wouldn't have found half the places that we wanted to see. Places like Toffee Factory Fern Grove Wignalls Somerseset Fox River Winerys The Fort (see photo inset), Whale World well done ladies.

One trip Andy took charge of the bus and took us on a tour of the coast line and rock formations and for a change some more rocks and then, just for a change, he took us to a Wind Farm.

On the divers lay day we all en mass descended on Kate & her winery got a personalised guided tour and couple of samples, then on the Sandelwood Factory for lunch and leer at the "local talent" OPPS SHEILA of course I never noticed.

Look I know that I'm getting a bit long in the tooth, but when your wife tries to get into some young surfies panel van, with a caption on the window that reads IF THIS VAN IS A ROCKING DON'T COME A KNOCKING I was devastated I can tell you, WOULDN'T YOU HAVE BEEN. And talk about being old fashioned I reckon Teddy takes the cake when he gives us the wrong bus key just to keep the girls home and over the kitchen sink eh!! Teddy (just joking matee Jan wouldn't stand for it.)

This is just a brief summary of what us 'girls' got up to. But seriously we did have a real good time and I personally want to thank JL for the big effort that he put in to put this whole trip together. Great Job John!

COUPLE OF THE HIGH LIGHTS OF TRIP

**JAN JUMPING INTO THE SWIMMING POOL FULLY CLOTHED NOT ONCE BUT TWICE, MUST HAVE BEEN SOMETHING IN THE AIR*

**MY JUNEE SINGING A DUET WITH A WELSH CHOIR TENOR OF ALL PEOPLE*

** BOY CAN BIG MICK HOLD HIS OWN IN THE SINGING LINE WELL DONE FOLKS*

** BUS WITH NO DRIVER WE ARE ALL SITTING UP LIKE JACKIE WAITING TO BE DRIVEN TO THE BARBIE*

BOB and JUNE

MY FIRST TIME

Jan Cornish

I journeyed on my first Dive Trip, even though not OS, but to W.A. Excited about 8 days of sun, beaches, wining and dining (No Cooking!), I got all that plus lots of laughs,

Yes, LLevey was on board!

While the Divers went off with their Divemaster, the 4 Ladies, June, Marie, Chris, & myself toured in the Mini Bus chauffeured by our Landmaster, Bobby.

LLevey, in his true style, then named us Bobby & his Hens. From Busselton to Dunsborough, Cape Naturaliste, to view the magnificent coastline 1st day, then toured the Margaret River region 2nd day visiting The Lavender Farm, Cheese & Fudge factories with tastings, a couple of wineries, A delicious Simmos Ice Cream, some more wine, we saw everything. Bobby was great, he never complained once, but we did look after him!



In Albany, as divers went off for their 1st Dive on the HMAS Perth, we were forced to have a "Lay" day, because they took the keys to our bus... But that didn't stop us, we footed it around Middleton Beach to the Lookouts & of course we found a cafe for a cappuccino overlooking the water.

Bobby took us to shop in Albany, then we met for lunch & yes a cappuccino. a big THANKYOU to our Landmaster, we had a lot of fun.

The weather was beautiful, food, wine & company was good, what more could a girl ask for?

The Lucky One

WA DIVE TRIP REPORT

Alan Storen

Being a dive junkie I was looking forward to the West Australian dive trip for a number of reasons, unfortunately my wife could not get time off work and so being away from her was not one of them. Had to get that in as she will probably read this article! I did 150 dives last year and the average was slipping. I needed the break and, having gone to PNG last year with VSAG, knew it would be a (good/great/ fantastic/wild/enjoyable) trip. I was told that as there were wives coming that it would be quieter than PNG but not so!! (Read the reports)



We started in Perth (well almost if you count the Airport), then on to 'Freo' for lunch and then travelled South to our first stopover (3 nights) at Busselton. Dived the Swan and a couple of dives on the Jetty which were all great. Other highlights of the Northern chapter were:

- a. *Helping Alan B and Mary M celebrate the Wedding anniversary – well they were about for a couple of minutes at least- and they said they were setting up the camera gear for the next day. Now I usually take people at their word but(enough said) Anyway congratulations to both!*
- b. *Learning a new saying from Mick J – "I am just going for a quick pot or ten" and I think most times that this was an understatement. I was probably on my third when Mick was up to ten!*
- c. *Some good dives on the Swan (not allowed to call it the HMAS Swan!! According to John Jennings- local guru, it is the ex-HMAS Swan or the former-HMAS Swan). The viz was good but not spectacular but plenty to see and gained some insight into what life on the ship might have been like. A very safe dive with plenty of cutouts on each side to allow easy entry/exit. Would have liked to do a night dive on it but maybe next time! I was surprised at the lack of red tape – I did not need to show my qual card but did sign an indemnity.*
- d. *The accommodation was comfortable and the fully cooked breakfasts were great. The meal on the first night was superb, can not remember the name of the place but it was on the beachfront and came highly recommended by Alan Coyne/ John Jennings and as they were locals we naturally had to try it. I usually do not have trouble putting away a seafood platter but I was struggling- must have been the two entrees!*
- e. *Alan C and wife Debbie put on a BBQ on the last night and it was fantastic. Over catered with excellent salads and other extras (the fish was superb). I was a bit concerned when two of the group rushed from the garage where the BBQ was*

situated with a drip tray of burning fat. No worries, it was dispatched to the lawn area and the billiard game went on in the garage next to Darren (master chef for the night!) as if nothing was out of the ordinary.

f. Seeing Lifesaver (make that phone saver) Ted retrieving John L's phone from under the smaller of the two jetties at Busselton. The phone was physically saved but did not work and JL needed to borrow a phone for the remainder of the trip. As I had only had work calls on mine (7 one day!!) I generously offered him mine and did it get a work out over the next few days. I was very glad Ted was able to recover the SIM card and JL was paying for the calls.

g. The 'BOB SCOTT' stories of the non-dive crew that did all sorts of wonderful thing with Bob in his bus. June was there to make sure that things did not too far out of hand and I will leave it to others to describe what went on. The stories I heard could not be published in a fine magazine like this!



Next morning it was off to Albany (make sure that is AL-bany and not ALL-bany). We did what could best be described as a tree crawl (as opposed to a pub crawl) as at almost every tree, well almost every tree, we needed to stop for a hug. I am not sure who was to blame but most seemed to point the finger at Ross L. I am sure many others, with pictures will be more able to elaborate. One 'tree-site' we looked at was from a tree-top platform/ walkway, 30 metre in the air and was quite impressive. I have been told a fire went through the area after we left (not just after-some weeks). After a friendly race to the accommodation we settled into our new home for the next few days. The accommodation was again great and the breakfasts excellent. Some highlights were:

a. The dives on the EX-Hmas Perth were good but not as impressive as I had hoped. The viz was down (5-7m) and a little disappointing when I was expecting 20m. It was still great diving, (I was in the water!) and a good contrast to the Swan. Many safety holes to help entry and exit and many interesting things to see the inside of the ship. I hope to dive the Hobart at Easter and will be able to compare all three. The Brisbane is next so I am told!

b. The 'BOB SCOTT' stories keep getting better and better!!

c. The Dives on the outer island (Michaelmas and Breaksea I think?) were much like the Prom and the dive on the Cheynes III was excellent.

d. The first night sing along in the accommodation was of very high standard, and made even better by the host who had an excellent singing voice. I am sure he was disappointed that we were not able to join him on more nights but we had other commitments- the THAI night that had been organised was outstanding and so



was the evening at Ron Moore's house (Ron was the Dive shop operator). Ron presented all with a CD of the local diving and is available if anyone wants to borrow it.

e. Unfortunately Ron could not fit us all on his boat (an oversized rubber dingy almost) and we had to put up with the most luxurious dive boat that I have ever been on. Plenty of room for gear, well organised, food after the dives, coffee, drinks, etc – you name it. Most civilised and something that I could easily grow accustomed to. (Unless I could afford to buy a boat like Greg Norman!)

Enough from me, time to adjust the watch back to work time, but one last thing that I must say is a very, very big thank you to John Lawler for his organisation, efforts – even though he could not dive, and his company as we shared the driving in the 'gear van'.

A most enjoyable and relaxing trip.
Thanks, John.



WA Dive Trip Report

Bruce Dart

The most amusing moments to me are as follows:

1. "Romance lost"

All the boys at lunch at Mount Romance shop/ cafe looking forward to a tour of the establishment massage tent and aroma therapy section conducted by "Miss Legs" from South Africa.

The automatic back flip done by all the lads, including myself, when approached by the more senior lady to escort us on the tour was simply amazing.

2. "Fire In Busselton"

At the dive leaders backyard indoor BBQ, when Darren was cooking snags and it went up in flames in the shed. The host exhibited some coolness in the heat of the moment, my guess is that it had happened a few times in the past.

3. "The lost keys of Busselton"

Everyone accusing each other that "they were the last to have them" and the general VSAG pandemonium that followed. I forget just how they eventually turned up but it was great fun in the meantime.

4. "The human race to Albany"

When our bus took a short cut from the tree skywalk tour stop. And the others thought they had lost us, thinking how will we find the B&B without JL, only to rock up and find our van parked and unpacked???

How can this be, says Mick!!!

ANON AKA (BD)

A YOUNG BOY'S FIRST TRIP TO WA.

By Neville Viapre.

The highlight of my year is the annual holiday overseas. Nothing beats packing up work for a week or two and heading off overseas!

WA wasn't overseas but it was the next best thing or even better! It was my first trip to WA and very exciting for me. It was a great opportunity to be a tourist and a diver.

We arrived in Perth and proceeded like typical tourists to Busselton and then on to Albany in our rented busses. On the way to Albany, we immediately did the tourist thing by "worshipping" the famous WA trees. (World famous that is!)

We walked around trees, we photographed trees, we sat under trees, we talked to trees, hugged trees, we prayed to the trees, peed under trees, admired trees, we hung about the trees and I think it safe to say we generally did the tree thing.

It was great to be in WA and everybody was now beginning to relax. It was good to see some much older members on the trip and I say if old people like Ted and Jan Cornish can do it then anybody can!

The actual diving was sometimes good and sometimes just average, however other aspects of the trip outweighed any hiccups.

We had some great meals and very acceptable bottles of red.

Well done JL. Let's do it all again!

"Nifty"

.....

WA dive trip report

Barry and Marie Truscott

For Marie and myself the trip to Perth was a great holiday and could not have gone any better. The fleet of vehicles we picked up at the airport was a brilliant idea that enabled us to do some sightseeing along the way from Perth to Busselton and on to Albany.

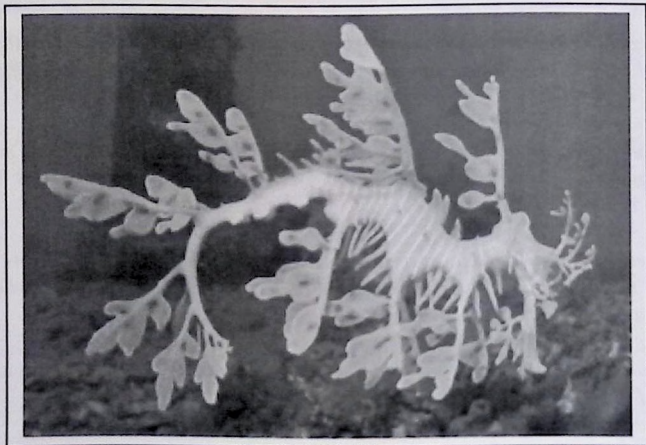
The amount of development along the coast from Perth to Busselton is huge with new housing estates and canal excavations prominent.

The diving on the Swan was diving as it should always be; hot weather, warm water and good visibility. The Swan is well positioned inside Cape Naturaliste on a sand bottom, which made for easy diving that I found most rewarding.

The diving at Albany on the Perth, which is a larger ship, was also enjoyable with the water slightly cooler and the vis not as good as the Swan.

As with all these trips, it is the club members and partners who add that something that makes it so enjoyable. We finished our diving at Busselton and Albany with typical VSAG parties!!

Bazza



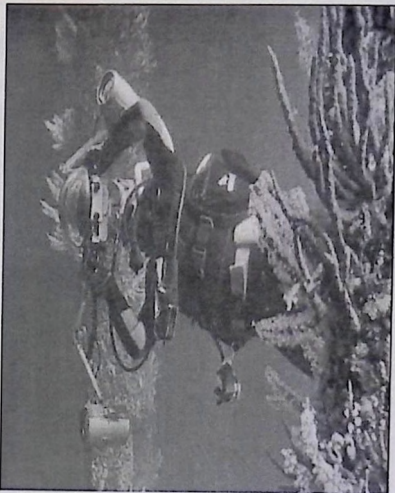
Busselton Jetty

Darren Pearce

One of the highlights on my dive trip to WA was having a dive under Busselton jetty. I could not believe the overall length of the jetty as it was around two kilometers. This was the first pier dive I've done from a boat when I went to dive the jetty I did not expect to find much underneath the jetty and I could not believe what I saw.

There was a mixture of temperate water coral and tropical water plants growing off the pylons and I have never seen anything like that before. There were so many different types of fish even seeing tropical types I had never seen before as well as temperate water fish. The dive under the jetty felt eerie from the sunlight shining through the water and the shades of the jetty pylons This was one dive I wish I had had my camera as there was just so many subjects to photograph.

The visibility under the jetty would have been at least 40 feet and the bottom time I did on the first dive was 80 minutes by the time I had finished the dive I could not believe I had spent that long underneath the jetty as it had only felt like 30 minutes From all the pier dives I have done this would have to rate as one of the best!



PERTH THOUGHTS

Chris Lewellyn

Peak season work commitments have not allowed me time to write up a full report to do any justice to what was a top notch trip , but a few words of thanks if I may.

John Lawler pulled together a trip full of memorable moments , some unforgettable wreck dives and fun party social nights, all enjoyed in the company of an easy going , friendly group of vsager 's.

Enjoying the underwater sights of the HMAS Swan , the Busselton jetty and the HMAS Perth were combined with historical sightseeing , fine foods , restaurants and good wine. I still smirk when thinking of that poor lot at the winery who had their cheese platter scoffed by Vsager 's thinking it was complimentary !

It also occurred to me during the trip that it would be very easy indeed to slot into that W.A. lifestyle and weather , especially when one can be legally be armed with a precision made spring loaded snare that looks like it was made for the space shuttle program.

The two dive operators we went through in both Busselton and Albany were real goers who looked after our group with a special interest no doubt enhanced by John Lawler 's local knowledge and personal efforts

Well done John and thanks for a great trip.





