

FATHOMS

APRIL-MAY 2007

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP



www.vsag.org.au

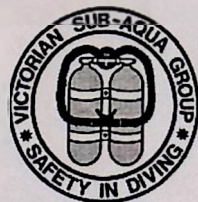
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Scenes from Cape Jaffa 2007

FATHOMS



Official Journal of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group

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VSAG General Meetings
3rd Thursday in the month

Editorial Submissions to:

Bell's Hotel
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Editorial

With Christmas well and truly gone and as we approach the colder weather it is time to mothball the 2mm wetsuit and drag out the 7mm. The next main event will be Easter at the Prom and as you read this it should have already happened - get your reports/comments/photos in for the June edition. After that it will be Palau in May (10 -17) and Pat tells me we have about 15 starters. Should be great.

We have had two great speakers at our last meetings – Peter Fear, the Dive Doctor from Rye, in February speaking about diving in the Bikini Atol and Mick Letch on paraplegic diving. A quiet one in April but another interesting speaker in May. If

you know of other interesting speakers please let the committee know asap so that we can maintain the high standard.

Our 'Twilights in the Zoo' night was fantastic, a perfect balmy night, a great spot—the Melbourne Zoo, the 'Babba' entertainment got all the audience going and the zoo proved a great backdrop. Unfortunately only a few VSAGers took advantage of the opportunity but those who went had a great night. If you were unable to go on the night selected it is well worth a visit. Over 1000 were in attendance so you might need to book.

We have planned a Queen's Birthday Weekend at Queenscliff and if you are keen please book in early so we can confirm numbers. There might be an opportunity for single day diving so if you can not make all three days let us know so we can arrange. Book in with John Lawler.

The sinking of the exHMAS Canberra project is proceeding slowly but good news is expected very soon. Our reps on the Victorian Artificial Reef Society (VARS) are John Lawler, Mick Jeacle and myself with input from Trevor Williams and Alan Beckhurst. If you have not joined VARS, and wish to do so, or just find out about the project then you can either log on to the VSAG web site and follow the links or log directly onto www.VARS.org.au

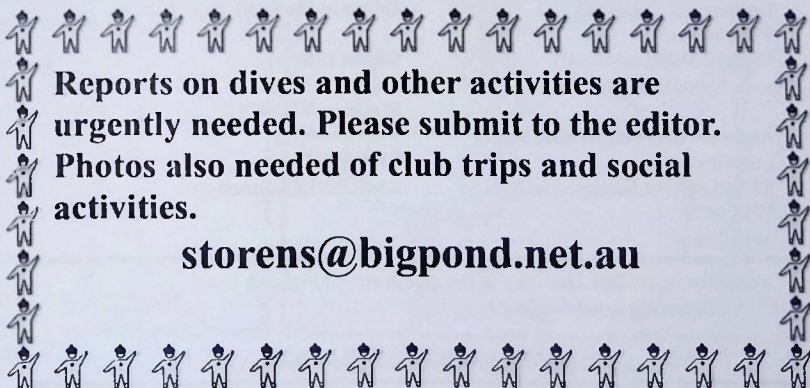
The VSAG web site is fantastic and by now I hope all have been able to register as members. Let me know if you have a problem and I will talk you through it one night. If you have any suggestions for the webmaster – Lloyd Borrett, please contact him directly via his email which is lloyd@borrett.id.au or via the web site.

We are also starting to plan the Christmas trip so if you have any preferences or opinions please notify one of the committee so we can consider. At this stage it looks like the west coast of Vic is gaining as the preferred destination. Give us your views!

I have not been inundated with support for a 'Xmas in July' function so unless there is a flood of demand in the next few weeks we will 'wait for December' to celebrate.

When you are cleaning out the cupboards, I am looking for VSAG memorabilia to include in Fathoms. I do have a set of the magazines going back to the early 70s but if you come across any old photos of interest I would be keen to include them in the next few editions. You can scan them and email or, if posted to me, I will scan and return. It might help if they were named as some have made slight changes to their appearance over the years.

Alan Storen



Reports on dives and other activities are urgently needed. Please submit to the editor. Photos also needed of club trips and social activities.

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ALL MEMBERS WELCOME

Cargo Ship Scuttled To Create Artificial Reef

Source: ABC News Online, 10 February 2007,
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200702>

Tasmania's newest artificial reef has begun settling into place off Maria Island on the state's east coast.

A 590-tonne former cargo ship was scuttled this morning to create the reef.

The scuttling was delayed slightly while a helicopter completed a last minute search of the site for any stray whales or other vulnerable marine life.

Then to cheers and applause from hundreds of spectators assembled on nearby boats, the Troy D was sunk.

A ball of flame shot-up from the vessel, but it was only for show.

The real work was done by explosives carefully planted inside the Troy D, which imploded the ship.

The 55-metre vessel has now sunk to the seabed next to a marine berth off Maria Island. It is hoped it will become a world-class dive site.



"Hand me the Hairdryer"

Diving Report 18 February 2007

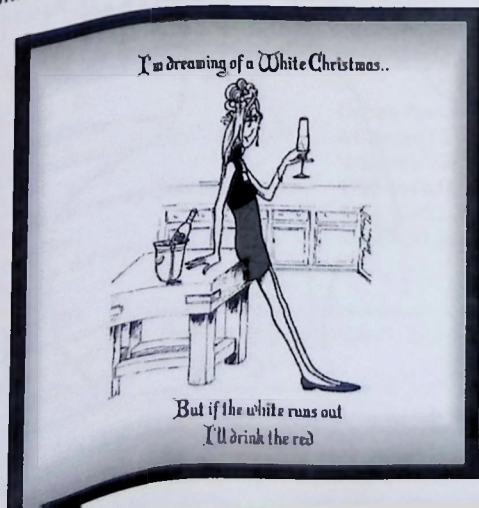
Alan Storen

*Divers: Alan Storen, John Lawler, Charlie Brincatt(boat driver), Peter Briggs, Lloyd Borrett, Jim Turner, Ken and Takae (potential new members who dived with us in WA on the exHMAS Perth and Albany dive)
Boats: JL and Peter Briggs.*

*With only 7 divers booked in and the weather report horrible it was to be a day for the brave, or so the weather bureau would have you believe! In fact the opposite was the case. The thunderstorms had bypassed the bay, the 20 kt winds were down to less than 10 and the 2.0m seas were no more than 0.5m. Another great day for diving [which day isn't!!]
We had planned to dive Hero's cave but settled for a slack water on the Lonsdale Wall. What a brilliant dive everyone had. Viz was great and the slack water timing spot on. All came up with a grin that told a thousand words.*

Alan Beckhurst had a crew from GetUnder outside the heads on the western side (Buckley park) and we joined them for lunch. Cray territory was about and so the divers all fell into the water with great aspirations. The diving was good but the cray bashers were disappointed. Many Port Jackson Sharks were sighted, a friendly seal and the quota of Abalone secured.

In summary another beautiful day on the water.



Dive Report 25 February 2007 – Phillip Island

Alan Storen

Boats: John Lawler and Mick Jeacle

Divers: above plus Alan Storen, Lloyd Borrett, Ken and Takae, Greg Richards, Bazza Truscott.

Sites: The Pinnacle, Bird Island and the long point reef.

With all divers loaded and launched we were ready to go. With Greg and Mick alternating with comments of 'sheer madness' we headed out through the 1-2 m swells and 15kt southerlies. I did not believe then for a second but after logging at least two dives on the way out to the pinnacles and Greg attempting to find any excuse possible to abort the dives and head for the nearest pub we finally arrive and the seas seemed to be 'not that bad'. The first group of divers from each boat hit the water and they could be seen for a long time while descending – viz must be OK we thought! When they surfaced it was confirmed – Greg indicated he could see the bottom of the pinnacle (30m) just after he started to descend. Fish live and marine landscape fantastic as usual and the divers were joined by a friendly seal and draftboard shark.

There was some confusion as to whether the divers from JL's boat actually dived on the pinnacle or the (still great) reef that runs to the South of the main pinnacle. Either way all had a great dive. I was on the second shift with Mick and John and again a great dive with excellent viz and lots to see. Lately I have had a fascination with nudibranches and found many on the pinnacle but only a few different varieties.

We found a nice quite cove to have lunch and solve the problems of the world. After a suitable surface interval Greg indicated the rock just near the cove was a good dive and so I joined him for a very interesting circumnavigation (underwater of course) of the 'rock' – called bird rock. Not sure how it got the name, no birds on it and did not look like any bird (flying or human) that I have seen but it sounded good to me. Lloyd and Takae joined us on the dive but departed anticlockwise while we went clockwise. Do not know if it was Greg or me they were trying to avoid! Many abs were sighted but possibly undersize – none taken.

JL took his crew off to the long point reef that points from the mainland out towards the pinnacle for an excellent dive. Mick took his crew back to the San Remo pub for more discussions and problem solving.

I could mention the panel beating that Mick did to the bottom of his motor but I will leave that for another time!

“MIGHTY BRAVE VSAG DIVERS”

JL.

“It looks ok here at the (Sorrento) ramp but it will be bloody rough around the corner when we face the south”

“If I didn't have so many divers booked in I would have stayed home”

These words from Mick Jeacle were right on the money and when the two boats with 9 divers took off at around 10.30am on Saturday 17th March we did run straight into 25/30knot winds as we headed for the rip.

On the way down the bay before facing the nasty water and strong winds, we had some fun watching several pods of dolphins moving around the bay all seeming to be chasing bait fish and generally flapping their tails which must be some type of message to each other.....great sight for two newbies who had not seen this before.....dive with VSAG and you get more than just diving!

Mick Jeacle had Tony Tipping, Greg Richards and John Merlo on board. My boat had 5 divers, new diver Tim Christian up for his “check out” dive, Bridey Leggatt, Mick Kakafikas and potential new diver Cindy Ahmar-Spieksmei. I felt a bit like a diver Dad with the newbies on board!

The plan was to go through the rip and dive the Nepean Wall but even before we got any where near the rip we could see it was a no go and very much an unsafe place to be! The Nepean Wall has defeated us again!

The swells were up around the two/three mtr mark so the plan was to join in with the Getunder crew and dive the North Wall.

Alan Beckhurst advised us he would put his shot down and set it around 20mtrs which was great for us as he knew this dive site really well.

With the flood tide still running but slowing up, Bridey Tim and I got to do the first dive. Tim was not in good shape as the swells had

made him quite sick but he was confident getting into the water would fix this up....it did! At 3mtrs while waiting for Tim my mask clip came away forcing me to surface for a refit and this meant we missed the shot line on top of the wall.

As it turned out when we did reach the bottom the scene was brilliant! The viz was around 20mtrs and we were in a vast area of sponges and soft coral. The colours were straight out of a Taubmans colour guide! We were welcomed by a very playful cuttlefish who seemed happy to have someone to play with...just great! Fish were in abundance and the blue devils were everywhere it seemed.

Our dive of around 35minutes was soon over and time to head up for a pick up by Mick.

Mick and Cindy were ready to go and the tide was right on slack water...they dropped in and found the shot and the wall...seems Cindy was super impressed with our bay diving as this was her first experience...Mick had a broad smile as well.

Mick's crew lined up for their second lot of divers but Tim on our boat was sick again so off to the quiet water inside Popes Eye for lunch.

Our divers did a dive around the Southern end of Popes Eye which was a very relaxed way to finish the day's diving....Mick's crew had already departed for home.

We will get onto the Nepean Wall one day but this was not our day.

Thanks to Mick Kakafikas for being a great help with our newbies Tim and Cindy and with the boat handling.

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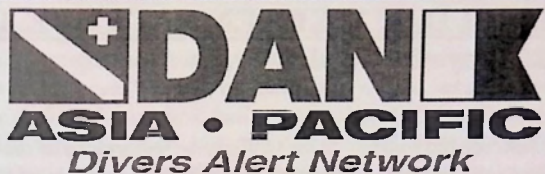
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Diving or Sex" and she





***Did you know that an
Emergency Evacuation can
cost in excess of US\$100,000?***

*Not many of us do, and not many of us would
be in a position to cover such an expense.*



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LABOUR DAY WEEKEND AT CAPE JAFFA

Gail & Andy Mastrowicz

After an uneventful journey from Melbourne, we arrived at the Cape Jaffa Caravan Park late afternoon on the Friday, and moved into our cabin.

Saturday we woke up to clear skies with a moderate North Easterly blowing and seas up to ½ metre. We launched the boats and proceeded out to North Breaker off Margaret Brock Reef. Justin, Joe & Nicole went in for the first dive but the area was not good and they surfaced relatively quickly, we then moved across to another area where they went back in to continue their dive – this was rewarded with an excellent catch! The boys reported that one of the highlights of the dive was watching Nicole amusing herself by attempting to catch a cray and then holding open a catch-bag trying to catch all the little crayfish larvae in the water, while they were under ledges wrestling their crays. “Well, a girl has to amuse herself waiting for these guys” Nicole was heard to say. Other highlights of this particular dive included one wetsuit shoulder zip left undone, one weightbelt left on the boat and then when retrieved was put on up through the catch-bag, one mask left on the boat and a runaway fin during the dive. Nicole was the saviour and did up the shoulder zip, helped hold the diver whilst he sorted out his weightbelt and also helped while the fin was donned under the water! Nicole also grabbed hold of Joe’s BC which was floating away after he took it off to get further into a cray hole. What would they do without a woman to



help out!!!! Justin’s girlfriend Catherine is starting her dive course on Thursday and will be a fully fledged diver in a matter of weeks – she can’t wait to get back to Cape Jaffa and try her luck with the crays – she has also learned all the do’s and don’ts of diving – her education is now complete.

Gail & Andy then geared up for their dive. It was a pretty dive with lots of canyons, swim-throughs and lots of fish following us around. Once again, our dive was very successful. Gail caught her first cray but unfortunately when it came on board the boat it had to go back as it did not quite meet regulation size, which in South Australia is 9.85 cm!! This North Breaker area is great cray territory but obviously lots of divers go there as it has been fairly heavily bashed.

We then had a leisurely lunch during which time the conditions got better and better. We then moved over to the Southern Breakers area, where we had heard was the spot where some divers last Xmas had been hit by a big wave and it had flipped their boat - consequently a keen eye was kept out for any rogue waves! A North Easterly breeze was keeping this area reasonably flat and it just got better as the day progressed.

Justin and Joe then went in for their second dive, and they were rather successful. Gail and Andy then went in for their 2nd dive - the territory was not as interesting and pretty as the previous diving area, but nonetheless was very successful. All 3 boats (ours, John Lawler and Mick Jeacle) bagged out. Joe's largest cray was 4.2 Kgs, Justin's largest cray was 4.1 Kgs and Andy's largest cray was 4 Kgs, which made Joe the winner this year of the biggest catch out of our own boat crew (which toppled Justin, who won last year).

We woke up on Sunday morning to a strong wind warning and definitely not good for boating, so we all drove into Robe where we sat and had a leisurely lunch. On the way back to Cape Jaffa, we detoured via a sandy track which led to the Cape Jaffa Light. On the way down the narrow track Justin, driving a standard 2-wheel drive, got bogged in the sand, so there was lots of laughs and frivolity trying to rescue him - Joe luckily had his snatch rope in his car and towed him out. The boys were itching for a dive, however one look at the white caps all the way out to the lighthouse quickly dulled their enthusiasm but not their eagerness. They therefore decided to do a "night dive" under the pier - so that evening around 8.00 pm





they donned wetsuits and dive gear and proceeded to do a shore dive under the Cape Jaffa pier. We all thought they were quite mad as it was freezing cold and blowing a gale, however after their dive they reported that the water was warmer than the 15degrees it was on our dive earlier in the day. Contrary to Leo's report from previous years, there were no crays to be seen under the pier, but there were lots of fish.

Monday the weather was still not too good, however we all geared up in dive gear and launched both our boat and John's boat intending to have one last dive and gather some more crays but we were met by 2 metre high seas and blowing a gale when we got past the point, but we decided to continue heading out to have a closer look and also keep Charlie company while he retrieved his cray pots. However, as we proceeded to take every second wave over the bow, the general consensus amongst the crew was that the conditions were not looking good for diving and we unanimously headed back to shore punching our way back through 2 to 2 1/2 metre whitecaps. By the time we actually got back to shore and retrieved the boat, everyone was completely drenched.



Meanwhile, Mick had launched his boat before giving us a call asking about the conditions. After hearing the conditions he then promptly retrieved his boat back onto the trailer and as he was towing it out, received a visit from the local wildlife constabulary, who were very dubious when advised that Mick had not actually gone out. On this note

the officers left the beach and headed up the road where they then set up a roadblock stopping all boats coming back from the beach, including ours. Luckily everything was in order and we only had empty catch-bags to show

the officers.

After a morning getting drenched on the boat, we returned to the camp and packed up and left on our return trip to Melbourne. All was uneventful until about a kilometer or two just out of the town of Great Western when we were alerted via radio from Justin that one of our boat tyres was throwing rubber and we should stop immediately. After changing the shredded tyre to the spare (which was new a few years ago) and realizing that the spare had deteriorated and that the tread was coming off, (even though it was a new tyre), we limped into town very slowly intending to purchase a new tyre and be on our way. Absolutely nothing was open so we limped into Ararat (16 Kms away) to find a service station to get another tyre to get us home but as it was a public holiday, nothing was open.



We went into the local Lions Club where they hold the "take a break" free tea/coffee and they very kindly let us use their phone to call the RACV and see what could be done. We were advised by the RACV that there was a 24 hour open service station in Ballarat, otherwise we would have had to stay overnight in Ararat (which was not a good option). We drove very slowly down to Ballarat and then sent Justin and Catherine ahead to suss out the 24-hour service station – which was definitely CLOSED so the decision was made to just drive slowly all the way into Melbourne and keep our fingers crossed that the tyre held out to get us home.

All in all it was a very slow trip home but we finally made it and got home around 10.00 pm so it was a very long day! Needless to say Andy now has 4 NEW boat trailer tyres and 1 excellent spare tyre!!

“BACK TO THE GOOD ‘OLE DAYS”

Jl.

Well it had a fell like the “good ‘ole days” when VSAG would have up to six private boats out for a days diving...remember those days?

Sunday 14th January started like this...

From the Sorrento side of the bay we had Peter Brigg's crew of Mick Kakafikis and John Merlo.

On Mick Jeacle's boat were Lloyd Borrett, Cathy Pedlow and Alan Storen. On my boat, the crew was Rob Kirk, Trevor Williams and Bridey Leggatt...Bridey had just discovered VSAG and there was a berth available for her to come along and see us in full flight...(now a welcome new member of our great club)

From the Queenscliff side of the bay, from the Getunder Dive Club Alan Beckhurst and Mary Malloy had a full crew on Freediver, Ian Hawkins and Adrian Klop likewise. In total six private boats from two private dive clubs all enjoying the comradre and the bay together....fantastic! (See vsag.org.au for pics)

Our plan to go immediately to the J4 was changed somewhat when we were alerted, just as we departed Sorrento, to the news from Freediver that the current was still running and that their dive plan was to drop into “Awesome Reef”.

Trevor had read and heard all the good reports about this wonderful dive but had not dived it. Mick and Peter headed out for the sub, and our crew stayed around in the bay for Trevor to dive this 27-metre reef, as there was time to get to the site and prepare safely to drop in. Rob was no stranger to this dive site and was jumping around with excitement.

Awesome Reef lived up to all expectations and as always it was

smiles all round after the divers climbed back into the Haines. For those VSAG'ers yet to experience Awesome Reef and it's sister Knawesome Reef, it is an experience well worth waiting for....but....don't wait too long!

Out on the J4 site all the other divers had done the J4 with all it's beautiful attractions..the torpedo tubes and the broken bow swarming with fish.....safe to swim through...the conning tower with the "Bottom Scratchers" plaque bolted to the southern base...and more fish life just "hangin' around" the conning tower...magic diving in any language.

The J4, one of our iconic dive sites, is an amazing wreck to dive in and around, and although divers dive this sub on a very regular basis it never seems (to me anyway) to get boring. Each dive offers something different from the past ones...viz can be better, or worse, fish life can be abundant, or even evasive. But what ever it is the J4 is like visiting an old friend...long my she be there for us!

Time for a relaxed lunch break in the lovely little bay under the Lonsdale lighthouse.

Sunday 14th January finished like this.....

Back into the bay for some drift diving fun that only beautiful Port Phillip Bay can offer. The current was running at full pace and the drift divers covered a big distance before the dive was finished.

Great day...and as always great diving company.

Back to the Scuba Doctor for tank fills, good diving chats with all the bods who frequent this efficient dive shop and a great coldie...diving life and diver friends doesn't get any better than this folks!!!

JL.

“OILS ‘AINT OILS”

John Lawler

A social night in Warrenwood on Saturday night 31st March and the upcoming Easter trip to Wilsons Prom saw the dive on Sunday 1st April come down to one boat from VSAG and one from Getunder.

My arrival home from the social night was 12.30am so the rise at 6.45am next day had me a bit slow but still managed to get to Sorrento at 8.45am. Signature One had Lloyd Borrett, Bridey Leggatt, Mick Kakafikas and John Merlo as the crew.

All divers arrived right on time and the weather was looking really spectacular! Gear loaded and off to the rip with a stop on the way to take in the numerous pods of dolphins at play....

Alan Beckhurst called up on 73 advising he was waiting for us just South West of Lonsdale Lighthouse.

The course through the rip was easy and we found Freediver with the crew keen to get into the diving. The dive options were discussed and our crew decided on the ever popular J4 submarine dive and the others went for the Rotamahana wreck. We decided to link up after the dive for the lunch break.

We arrived on the dive site and the ocean was ...well..like oil...silky smooth and very little swell...a rare sight for Bass Strait! We were in heaven. We helped out another private dive boat who had shot the sub but we advised them they were well off the mark, due they told us to a suspected fault in their sounder..we made them welcome and offered our shot line.

Soon after our arrival the charter boats arrived from Portsea (Dive Victoria) and Queenscliff (Queenscliff Dive Centre) and the site was becoming very crowded. We advised the commercials of the dive situation and everybody was sensible and responsible..great to see both sides of the dive community working in together for safety in diving.

Lloyd, Mick and John were on for the first splash and after the dive reported a fantastic adventure on this excellent dive artificial reef.

By now some 30 divers from the commercials were splashing in and Bridey and I found many of them inside the sub making it not too safe for us to enter the bow entrance. We moved along the decking and then found the aft area clear of divers and dropped in. Viz was about as good as gets in there and lots of fish to keep us amused and interested.

Down to the stern then back to the bow, moving past the numerous other divers for a final few minutes at the broken bow. The shot was located on the port side and easy found for our slow ascent to the red surface buoy.

All on board were very happy with our dives but best of all the ocean had become even more calmer than we first arrived...it truly was just like a big oily pond, but "oils 'aint oils"

Another big surprise was the communications from Chris Llewellyn that he was out with Anthony Finnigan and were on their way out to visit us...no sooner off the radio and they with us and the new Mustang cruiser looking just majestic on the calm oily waters. A decent size fish was proudly displayed and after the usual chatter the boys headed off for Barwon Heads... (see pics on the VSAG website)

The suggestion to head back into the bay was vetoed by John (the king cray hunter!!) Merlo. In conditions like this the back beaches should be the place to dive was his cry.. and yep we all had to agree this was the best plan.

On a previous back beach dive when Charlie Brincat was doing the boat skippering for me he found some excellent reefs during some sounding around whilst the divers were down and marked about 8 reefs...this was the area we ended up in which was about 15kms east of Point Nepean.

The reefs were very good and some good bommies and ledges were dived but the crays and abs were nowhere to be found...but in calm conditions this back beach dive was excellent.

Diving over it was back to the ramp, gear out and off to the Scuba Doctor for tank fills, cold drinks and nibbles...a perfect end to another great VSAG dive day on a brilliant and rare oily calm sea.

JL.

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A New Diver Day With VSAG *by Lloyd Borrett,*

www.borrett.id.au

Wow, I'm really, really looking forward to this. My first ever dive with VSAG!

Nobody here yet. Oh well, they said be at the bottom car park for nine, so here I am at eight thirty ready to go. Perhaps I would have had time to stop at the cafe for breakfast after all. And perhaps not. I think I'm too excited to eat, thinking about all the things I could see out there, in the open blue sea. Well, green sea. Well, dark grey, really.

Never mind, I'm sure it'll be fine once we get going. Whenever that is. Some time today, I hope.

Here's John Lawler and his boat! Yippee! What do I do to help get the boat ready? Undo the straps, take the flag off of the prop and stow all of the bits. I'll do all those things, then, shall I, while you watch and make sure I'm doing them properly?

Oh here is Mick Jeacle with his boat, and Greg Richards is with him. Legends one and all. There, we can go any time now. We have to wait for Mick to finish his breakfast. Obviously he did stop at the café on the way down. Well if Mick needs his breakfast, I can't argue with a man of his eminence.

Finished, sir? Let me take the wrapper and put it in a bin for you. Now can we go? We can! We can go diving!

What now? Get my kit aboard, not forgetting my weight belt.

What now? Shut up and wait for everyone else to arrive. Did I tell you this will be my first dive with VSAG? I'm so excited I can hardly speak! Just think of the things we're going to see today! The fish and the soft coral and the...

I'm sorry, I beg your pardon? Go and fetch the launch ticket? Where do I get that from? The machine over there. OK.

Here comes the rest of the team. Great people, all of them. Oh my word! That's Alan Storen! He's a legend, he is! The greatest diver of them all! He's done everything! He's been everywhere.

None of you has even got your kit aboard yet. Don't we need to get a move on? Err, aren't we going to get the rest of your gear aboard so we can get away? I'll give you a hand, if you like. If you all just point to where your gear is, I'll go to your cars and carry it back to the boat and make sure it's neatly stowed away, ship-shape!

I'll just help you launch the boat. My this ramp is slippery! No, it's all right, I can get up by myself. My, that was unsettling, but I don't think I've broken anything!

What do you want me to do now? Stand in the water and unhook the boat when you're ready. No problem I'll stand here and do that for you. Wheee, but this is odd! I'm up to my waist in cold seawater, and I can't feel a thing.

Oooh, the engine's running! We're almost away. I can get in now! I'm in and we're off!

Wow, this is bumpier than I expected. And that sounded like a big bang to me, was it OK? This seems like a very fast boat. It isn't that fast, but it doesn't do too badly once it's on the plane? What's that? Oh, I see, most of the hull comes out of the water, leaving just the bit at the back supported, so the prop has less water to push out of the way. I'll pretend I understood that for the moment and find out more later.

Are we on the plane now, then? Too many divers and too much kit. Ah, well. Why are we stopping? Why are you taking the top off the engine?

It's running again and we're off again! Where are we going? Out to the heads. Right. I think I could have worked that out for myself, actually. What I really meant was, where specifically? To a nice reef, just off Queenscliff. OK, great. What will we see there?

I said, what will we see there? Yes, it is a bit hard to chat with the engine noise, isn't it?

Here we are, here we are! I'm in first? I'm diving with the master, Alan? Get outta town! My first ever dive with VSAG and I get to dive with Alan!

Time to get kitted up. There isn't a lot of room in one of these small boat thingies, is there? If I watch Alan, though, I can pick up some tips. Weight belt first, then hood, then the left glove, then the BC and tank, then fins, then the right glove. Ready when you are, sir.

Oops! Buddy check. I was so excited, I forgot. I hope Alan doesn't think I'm a complete idiot.

Oh, is this a drift dive? No. Okay, so what's the buoy and line for? Safety line. Oh, sorry. What's the pick on the end of the line for? Isn't it deep enough down there?

Oh, we roll in off the side of the boat. I've never done that before. This is so exciting. I'm in the sea! Why is Mick glaring at me? I don't think I did too much damage to the side of the boat as I rolled in.

Wow, look at the bottom. It's magic. Soft coral everywhere. This is brilliant!

Oh, oh! What's wrong? Why is Alan pointing at that rock? Why is he tapping the side of his head? I don't know what you mean, but if I nod and look impressed, I can ask him later.

There's a fish! A big, greyish pointy fish. I'm going to have to get a fish book.

Where's Alan? He was here just a moment ago. Oh no, I've lost my buddy. Where are you? Oh no! Oh no!

Aaaaah! What the hell was that? Something tapped me on the shoulder. I daren't turn around. I daren't not turn around.

It was Alan! What do you want me to do? Come over there and get really close to the seabed and put my hand under that rock and... ouch! That really hurts! Get the damn thing off me! No, I mean it, I think I'm going to lose my thumb.

That wasn't nice, you did that on purpose. All right, it was quite funny really — well, it will be when I do it to the first new diver I take diving with VSAG.

Is it over already? Oh no! I've still got some air left. Please can we stay down just a few more minutes? Just five minutes? Just two? Just one more? Oh, pleeecease?

What was that? I take my BC off and pass it up. Yeah, mine is a 15 litre

steel cylinder. Heavy aren't they? Oh dear, did I mention I've got 16 kilograms of lead in my weight harness. I think I can fin hard enough to keep my head above water. Harness off, that's better. It's a bit awkward getting out of the water and into one of these small boats isn't it?

Great, brilliant, fabulous! That was absolutely brilliant!

What do we do now? Wait for everyone to finish their dive, then we're heading to Pope's Eye for lunch. Have I mentioned my thumb is throbbing?

Err, Alan, why were you pointing at that rock? I mean, I know if I had a bit more experience I'd understand, but I'm just trying to learn. You once got a big crayfish from under it. A very big cray. There was nothing there today, but twenty years ago there was a great big cray under it. You've never seen another cray anywhere near it ever again, but the one you got was absolutely huge.

So, let me make sure I've got this entirely clear, what you were doing was pointing at a bare rock, with nothing except bare rock to see, except in your memory?

Off to Pope's Eye for lunch we go.

No, I've never been here before. Pongs a bit doesn't it? Yes, those seals are amazing, but the birds are very noisy.

Err, hang on a minute. Why is everyone calling Mick "Big Lloyd"? Lloyd Bridges, Sea Hunt. C#@*. Oh! I get it! But my name is Lloyd and I'm just as big as he is. This is going to be confusing.

Okay, so Alan has bought another cylinder for me to use on my second dive. Many thanks. Where's your second cylinder? Don't worry, you didn't use enough air to need a second cylinder? Wow. I mean, I used almost a full 15 litre cylinder and yours was way smaller than mine to start with. I hope one day I'm as good a diver as you are.

Where are we going this afternoon? A scallop drift dive off of Rosebud. That will be great! I've never dived for scallops before. No worries. Greg is going to show me what to do. And I get to use Alan's catch bag.

This is even better than this morning! It isn't deep and the sun is shining.

Acres of sandy bottom. That's an octopus! Or a squid. I wonder what the difference is. And another of those pointy fish, but this one is brownish-green, not grey, so I'm really going to have to get a fish book.

Where are the scallops? I've only seen a few small undersize ones.

Back on the boat. My catch bag is empty. Oh so the scallops were off to the right were they Greg. But I was on your left. You got plenty of nice large ones did you?

Would I like to go over to that shipping marker and go snorkelling with the seals. You bet!

Wow that current is really strong. Right, I can hang onto this bit of pylon. Oh look at that small seal just underneath me. Aren't they just so cute? That big female seal seems to be worried about something. Now where did she go? Where did that big bull seal go? I'm not so sure about ones that size. Aren't they potentially aggressive?

Back in the boat again and heading into shore. Nah, pal, I'm standing here ready to catch the boat while some other daft beggar fetches the trailer down to the water. I might be keen, but I'm not a slow learner. And I can't possibly winch the boat onto the trailer on account of having a severely damaged thumb.

I've heard legendary stories about a dive day being incomplete without a quiet session in an appropriate establishment nearby. Not today. Another time.

Boat owner paid, it's time to pack up and drive home. Try not to run anyone over as I leave. So, I'm a VSAG diver now.

Car For Sale

[Car Sale in Ireland - Read the text first then look at photo on page 30]

The following is an actual advertisement in an Irish Newspaper!

1985 Blue Volkswagen Golf Only 150 km

Only first gear and reverse used

Never driven hard Original tyres

Original brakes Original fuel and oil

Only 1 driver

Owner wishing to sell due to employment lay-off.

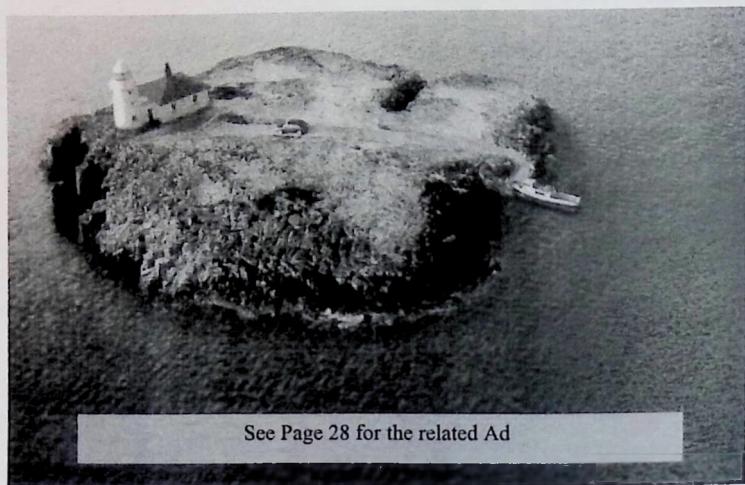


Bob and June Scott

Sam, Barry and Marie Truscott

Andy and Gail Mastrowicz

Anyone game to guess the year??



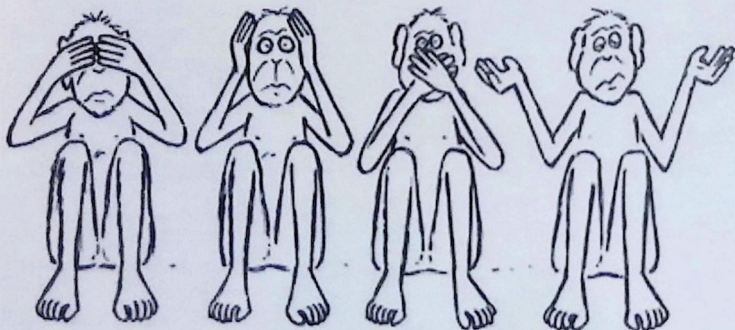
See Page 28 for the related Ad

SEE
NO
EVIL

HEAR
NO
EVIL

SPEAK
NO
EVIL

HEY-
SHIT
HAPPENS



Xmas at Jervis Bay and Merimbula

Before my Xmas Pudding had time to settle, we were heading up the Hume to Jervis Bay to see out '06 on the liveaboard Ocean Trek. This required an overnight stop in Huskisson, so we booked a camp site. Don't you hate it when your air bed gets a hole in it? With bleary eyes I loaded our gear onto the small tender for the trip out to our floating resort. Typically for this time of year, it was windy, but JB offers plenty of lee waters, so off to Bowen Island we went! The water was cold and filthy, and not much to see, but our shivering was quelled with a hot lunch then we headed to the northern entrance. Again, poor sea conditions, but a lovely afternoon tea waiting for us. For the next dive, my Log reads " might have been good if I could see something".

We hadn't come expecting excellent diving, but were disappointed. Ocean Trek made up for the diving with excellent meals, comfy beds, and great crew. The highlight though turned out to be the hot water hose on the dive deck which proved to be heaven both gearing up and to warm up after a dive. Mick and Lyn have been operating Ocean Trek, an 80 tonne steel catamaran, for 12 years, and just about have it perfected. The 18 metre tri deck vessel can accommodate up to 23 guests in double and bunk beds. Our cook, Carly, produced wonders from her good sized galley, meaning this is not a trip to lose weight!



Stupidly, we opted not to do the night dive on the first day as we were put off by the vis on the previous dives, but those who did came back with reports of 15 metre vis and lots of wobbies and fish. The second days dives were around Bowen Island and were a bit better than the previous days, but the night dive

was clearly the best, while not living up to the standard of the previous evening. They had "Always look on the bright side" booming as we geared up, and everybody was singing along as they pulled their kits on! An interesting and varied crew of divers, with couples and singles, and one of the divers introduced himself to me as my ex's stepson! Small world.


Day three, and the diving was similar, around 4 – 5 metres vis and 14 deg. On the third dive we experienced the worst conditions, so many jellies that vis dropped to almost nil, then a small gutter with a 10 kilo snapper resting. We finished the day off at Nursery Steps, where we had been night diving, and it proved to be the best fish dive of the trip with vis almost reaching double figures. No night dive so we settled down to another sumptuous dinner and socialising.

Just two dives the last day, but nothing noteworthy. We enjoyed our last lunch aboard and headed back to the wharf. Full marks to the vessel and crew, but we know JB can provide much better diving. Mary was disappointed to find her car had been badged whilst parked in the council park, but no serious damage. We met up with John Corby and Steve Cartlidge on the water, then again at the wharf. They had found and dived the Firefly wreck, and had a few more days at JB.


We had a clever plan to drop gear at Merimbula Divers Lodge and continue to Eden so we could have a New Years dinner with the VSAG group. The evening was lovely, but VSAG being all old farts, retired early, while us spring chickens went back to the lodge at 10.00 and nearly stayed up till 11.00! We luckily had an 8 bed unit to ourselves for the entire stay. While most suffered with day after syndrome, I was in trouble with arthritis in my knee. We had a very lazy start to the New Year!



On the second day of the New Year, Alan Storen invited Mary to dive from Mick Jeacles boat, and I hobbled along for the ride. The sea built as we left Twofold Bay, and I heard Mick tell Alan it was "Madness" as he laughed and continued! We dropped AS and Mary into the maelstrom and picked



The Troubadour



Thoughts and experiences of a VSAG member and diver.

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Suffering from a hectic start to 2007, a rushed flight and drive down, and a big dive day on Saturday, Sunday at the Prom was 'rest day'. But! Not only was the weather fine and sunny, the water was flat and warm. Having missed the boat literally, a shore dive in Norman Bay became the perfect alternative. With buddy Rohan Coots and family, we loaded up the truck and drove down onto Norman Beach, geared up and made a long and gentle surface swim along the north side of Norman Bay. Out about 250 metres, we descended to the grand depth of 4 metres, fossicking out to the headland and back. For an hour we cruised through the weed, bommies, overhangs and fish life in warm water made warmer and brighter by the protruding sunlight. A great way to unwind from the previous day's exercise and hang-over. A bonus to the dive was to be in the northern *marine park* section of Norman Bay where fishing is allowed. Quite a few good sized abs down there guys.

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To bastardise the words of U.S. President Kennedy,

"Think not what your club can do for you, Think what you can do for your club."

Club membership should be about giving a little more than you get. Then the club as a whole is better than the sum of its individual members. Unfortunately at the Prom there were a couple of instances of equipment use (perhaps equipment abuse) where things were not left in better condition by the users. Having to clean others' BBQ mess in the dark, or to siphon petrol from car petrol tanks for pumps, is disappointing. All it takes to avoid this is a little unselfish thought, and a little extra effort for the good of other club members. Mick's boat fell off the trailer. On the way up a steep incline. The myriad number of bright ideas to fix this was amazing.

Common sense prevailed and the call quickly went out.....

VSAGers came from everywhere.....

With a sharp application of communal brawn, the boat was back on the trailer with very little damage done.....

"Think what you can do for your club....."

