

FATHOMS

FEBRUARY—MARCH 2007

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP



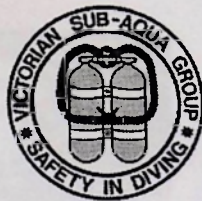
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FATHOMS



Official Journal of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group

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VSAG General Meetings
3rd Thursday in the month

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South Melbourne, 8.00 pm
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Editorial

Some great social events and excellent diving to report on in this edition and a full calendar of events to put in your diary over the next few months. I had about five times as many photos as I could fit in so some will appear in future editions.

The Christmas function/luch at the Storens went very well and thanks to all involved in the organisation. Over 40 were in attendance and some were still around at 11pm. Feedback on whether we should have a similar function this year would be good. Should we try a Christmas in July? The major prize (wetsuit) was won by Cathy Williams and there were many other happy prize winners. Thanks must go to the donors of the prizes and those who arranged them: The wetsuit from SONAR (Pat Reynolds), Outdoor coat from National Equestrian (Chris Llewellyn), Jocks and Sox from Pacific Brands (Gabriel Sekias) and the hamper (arranged by Priya) and wines and chocolate from the committee. There were also other donations on the day: wine (Tony Tipping and Alan Storen and I think Gerry (beer).

The Christmas trip away was also very successful, thanks to Pat for his efforts. We stayed at Fountain Caravan Park at Eden, and the 14 days seemed to fly. The weather was not always kind but that did not stop the enthusiastic divers and we got out most days. More about our adventures can be read in this edition including a VSAG 'wedding' and Ian and Kerry Springall horrific trip home through the fires. Also we have a non-diver report from Jude Storen.

Bag and Size Limit Review – VRFish is seeking input to the Bag and Size Limit Review. There has been a strong indication that fishers would like to see simple regulations in place. A snapshot of submissions received to date - an increase in size limit of 30cm be applied to Snapper, Bream, King George Whiting and a increase in bag limits for rock lobster. The recreational fishing community still have an opportunity to participate in this review, submissions are due to VRFish by Monday 19 February 2007 – email your comments to fishregs@vrfish.com.au. So go on – have your say!

We have some great guest speakers planned for the next few meeting so make sure you keep the nights free. We start this month with Peter Fear (Owner of Dive Doctor in Rye) and he is going to tell us all about diving at the Bikini Atolls – should be a very interesting night.

The social committee have planned a 'Jazz in the Zoo' night for the 18th March – come along and join the fun. (Details included in this edition– page32) Let Priya know asap so she can coordinate.

I hope you have all had a chance to log onto our new web site [www.vsag.org.au] and registered as a member – you do not have to logon under your own name and can use a alias. We have a submersiblehuman, lifolovel-eters, bubbles, mammosgrub, boxcow, platypus, Shags, BigM, poobaa, peri-scope, fishyguy, Shadow, and so the list goes on. I must thank Lloyd Borrett for the massive effort he has put in on the web site and it would rank as one of the best websites around. If you have not had a look do it now and if you want to see all the 'hidden or non-public' areas you will need to register also. There are forums where you can add a comment if registered and a photo gallery.

Enough for now – need to get back under the water

Cheers

Alan

PLEASE NOTE WEB SITE DETAILS:

www.vsag.org.au

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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Committee meets 2nd Thursday of the month at: Leighoah Hotel
1555 Dandenong Road Oakleigh.

ALL MEMBERS WELCOME

VSAG CHRISTMAS TRIP

Those that came and went:

Pat Reynolds

Mick and Annie Jeacle

Greg and Jan Richards and daughter Jasmine and boyfriend Nick

Ian and Kerry Springall

Alan and Jude Storen

Barry and Marie Truscott (with visits from family)

John Mills and Priya

AJ Storen and Greg Jones

Alan Beckhurst and Mary Molloy (2 days - 2 dives)

Dives included:

Tasman Hauler and

Bolte Tugs

Navy Wharf

Chipmill wharf

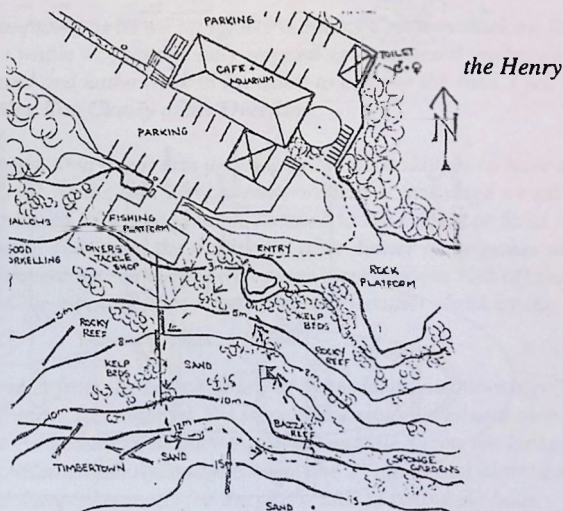
Seahorse shoals

Empire Gladstone

Merimbula Wharf

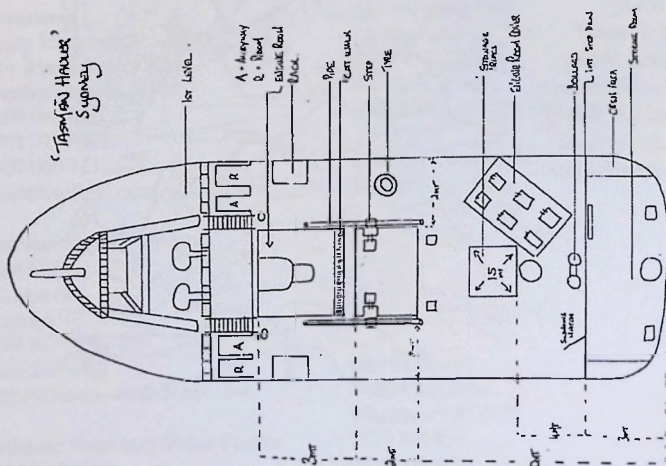
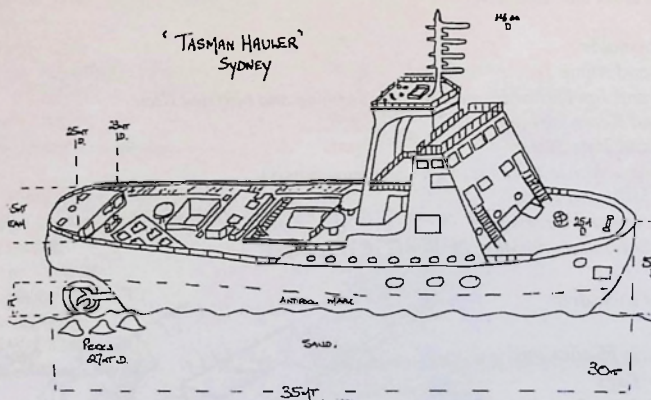
Mewstones rock

Eden Breakwater.



One of the highlights of the diving included seeing Pat get wet under Merimbula Pier (he whimped on most other dives). Mary Molloy and Alan Beckhurst also joined the VSAG group for the New Years Eve Dinner at the Pub and Mary joined us on a couple of dives on the Tasman Hauler and the Navy Pier. They were returning from a trip to Jervis Bay and stopped at Merimbula Divers Lodge for a few days.

More reports to follow



Everyone is entitled to my opinion

There are two secrets to life...
1) Don't tell everything you know...

EDEN XMAS 06-07 (The First Week): By Greg Richards

After slaving away all year in the mindless pursuit of money and power: setting goals, meeting budgets and playing chief sycophant to the Boss, the thought of going diving at Eden was the manumission of my dreams.

Christmas Day 2006 in Melbourne was one of those never to be forgotten special weather events. In the middle of the worst drought in living memory and after weeks of very hot dry days it snowed around the outskirts of Melbourne, and hailed on the rest of us. The temperature didn't get over 13 C and the rain never let up.

Such was the scenario facing us as we set off to Fountains Caravan Park on Boxing Day. It rained the whole way up and only stopped as we crossed the border. I had left dystopia behind and had a week in Paradise to cleanse the soul. I felt like Banjo Patterson turning into Clancy of the Overflow.

As the VSAG crew began to arrive it was decided by the boat skipper to have a lay day to kick things off. As the rain was only intermittent at this stage we all got into the groove and relaxed with a good book, listened to the cricket or fixed recalcitrant TV antennae. That night the traditional after dinner get together was enjoyed. Much refreshment was consumed and plans were afoot to kick off the diving with 2 shifts in the morning after a cursory early weather check by the Dive Captain.

Sad news was the verdict from the Inscrutable Pat Reynolds in the morning. "I wouldn't dive in that shit..." he intoned. We stood there stone faced and thoroughly disheartened. As he sauntered back to his TV and silk sheets we looked at each other and proceeded to quietly load the boat. The 2nd crew was alerted and told to be armed and dangerous ready for the phone call to board the boat.

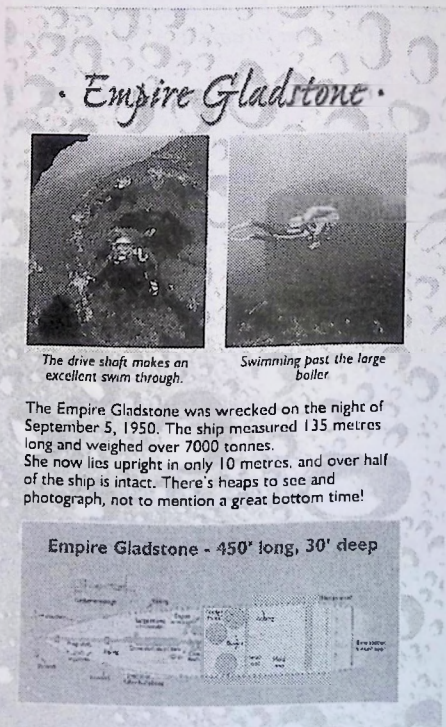
Dive 1 was to be the Tugs. Alan and Ian wanted to dive the Tasman Hauler, Mick was ambivalent and I was devastated. I'd rather eat worms than dive the Hauler again, and it was agreed that Ian and Alan would dive it and Mick and myself the Henry Bolte. All came back happy. The sea was calm, it was clear and it was warmish. Dive in that shit indeed!!! A few computers played up that day or simply weren't there, and this provided a worthwhile problem solving exercise for the Brains Trust.

On the way in it was suggested by the bellicose skipper that I would dive on one of the large buoys off the chipmill to source some prized Eden mussels. "But I don't eat mussels" I protested vehemently. "Get in the \$#%ing water and fill this bag NOW!!" was the quiet and considered response from the skipper. With visions of waking up that night with a horse's head in my bed, I threw myself to the task. Alas, the buoy and anchor chain had recently been cleaned and the mussels were smaller than your fingernail. It was with some trepidation that I re-entered the boat "sans mussels" and politely informed the others that they could get their own at a later date - (about 2009)

Back at the boat ramp the second crew ambled onto the boat and they too had a dive on the Tugs and Alan and myself had a quick relax under the Chipmill Pylons. It was decided to give Pat Reynolds a refresher course in Early morning Weather conditions reconnoitering.

Over the next few days the rain continued to fall and although disheartening it didn't prevent dives from taking place. The SS Jeacle made a successful return voyage to the Empire Gladstone complete with a full crew and surprisingly this year, even a full tank of petrol. One of the chaps felt less than flash after the dive and almost broke the cardinal rule of Mal de Mare - that is; always spew out of the boat!! The dive was sensational and the 2nd dive at Mewstone Rock wasn't too bad either.

Some of the other dive crew weren't too flash either on dry land. Bazza had arrived crook with Barrangitis, and John Mills contracted a chest infection which I diagnosed as Pryaitis. He was Ok until the 3rd time he found that Prya had lost or de-



stroyed his keys to unlock his bikes, and he then entered an insanity plea and we committed him to bed rest with a VB every 30 minutes. Pat Reynolds didn't appear to be sick but he must have had something terribly wrong with him to keep him out of the water with conditions this good.

Due to the drought being ruined by the ever present rain we took several days off, and spent quality time with our loved ones. Alan Storen dropped his missus off at the movies and went diving under Merimbula Jetty. Isn't love grand.

Speaking of Merimbula Jetty, someone asked me where it was, and I took the audacious liberty of explaining the fact that it is customary in this country to place Jetties in the town for which they are so named. Hence, the Merimbula jetty is not located in Pambula, Eden or even in Tathra, but needless to say, it, is in Merimbula.

Other pastimes included Wine tours, shopping, Trash and treasure markets in Pambula and a large contingent trekked to Bermagui to gorge on the worlds best fish and chips. After the sumptuous feast was demolished, a wander along the Bermagui Jetty was enjoyed (although some wag suggested it might actually be the Merimbula Jetty)

New Years Eve saw most of us awake including the new ring ins from Jervis Bay-Alan Beckhurst and Mary Malloy. All interest was in seeing if the rumoured and much anticipated early death of Mick Jeacle would eventuate. Despite having stubby holders made up in advance advertising his demise by the end of 2006, midnight saw him looking remarkably alive –and awake for the 1st time in over 10 years.



Before I left we put to sea one more time with the main purpose being to secure a feed of the highly acclaimed Eden Navy Wharf Mussels. This time we had a non diving skipper and me as deckie to supervise Alan and Mick, as they snorkeled amongst the pylons for the mussels. They got a large potato

sack full in 10 minutes and we then proceeded to the Tugs (again).

As we geared up to dive the Tasman Hauler the skipper knocked his head against the Bimini and sent his \$300 glasses to the bottom. Amid much softly spoken words of disappointment, he expressed a keen interest in each and every one of us spending the next 45mins searching every square inch of the ocean under the boat or not bothering to get back into said boat after the dive. His motivation worked and Alan actually found the glasses not far from the wreck, but left Mick cruising along the bottom in a futile search for the entire dive. I dived on the wreck itself and I'd still prefer the worms.

On the way back we burnt off the end of our tanks on the Sea Horse Shoals near Boyds Tower and it was a blast. Large bommies coming up 30ft off the bottom smothered on schooling fish. A cracker of a dive to finish me off before returning to the reality of Employment.

That night for our farewell drinkathon the neighbours gorged on the mussels and continued their time honoured tradition of usucaption, much to my dismay.

It was still raining on my last day so I took up Alans offer to leave the tent behind and let him pack it up dry some other day. The boys thought they'd rub it in and proceeded to gear up and go diving. Standing under the Jeacle pergola it was noted that Ballarat was flooding, to which every person present nodded and proceeded to comment that apparently it was flooding in Ballarat. As we all stopped, Mick Jeacle looked up from his paper and blandly stated that apparently there had been a flood in Ballarat yesterday. Christ I hope so, or we just wasted 10mins of small talk for nothing. We took small talk to new depths that day.



Saddam was hung, the English cricketers were hung out to dry and my trailer was packed. It was time to move on. As we passed Genoa the rain stopped and hasn't been seen since.



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be in a position to cover such an expense.*



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Eden - VSAG Xmas holiday 2007

Thoroughly enjoyed myself at beautiful Eden and surrounds. Never idle - as a non diver there was heaps to do. No amount of rain or heat stopped us. When the guys were diving we either shopped till we dropped or learnt to bargain hunt from the specialist Annie J. Unfortunately she missed out on a dragon bargain. With saved \$\$\$s, lunchalots (Kerry, Annie and little me) enjoyed lovely luncheons plus a wine of course, at different locations/towns. We'll be exercising/dieting more on our return home. Pampering from tip-to-toe was also on the agenda - 2 hours of sheer bliss. Have to add that to the yearly holiday indulgence.

*One day whilst trying to find the perfect dive spot and after an extremely long scenic drive to Tathra, lead by the proud owner of the new blue sexy wheels, we witnessed some amazing rare sights. **Actually saw Pat dive at Merimbula wharf - unfortunately no camera** and also observed Tarzan (Michael K) climbing up the wharf ladder in full dive gear. What a man, great cook also! That Pat again, you have to watch the quiet ones, as the lady caravan park owner thought he and Priya were married.*

Wish we were back there! Missing the early morning wake up calls of the bell birds and kookaburras, the reads, the catnaps, fabulous beach walks, swims, Merimbula movies, cheap reds and regular chats around the hospitable Jeacle's tent. All good fun and relaxing looking forward to the next xmas trip.

Lunchalot - Jude Storen

THE LONG WAY HOME

After having 12 interesting touring and diving days in Eden we decided to pack up on the 6th Jan having commitments to return to work on the 8th. We left Fountain Caravan Park about 11.30am. We arrived at Cann River to an unusual traffic jam. After a long wait we finally got to the police officer who proceeded to direct us on a 'slight' detour because the Princess Highway was closed due to the fires. After travelling 91 km on our detour to Dodalla which is 100km inland between Eden and Bega, we arrived and found a service station. After waiting over an hour to get fuel we found out that the highway had been reopened. After looking at the map and finding our 'slight' detour would be another 300km out of our way we decided to go back to the highway. After stopping for lunch we resumed our trip home arriving around 3 hours late.

THE VSAG WEDDING OF THE YEAR

Alan Storen

*It all started very innocently when Pat was sitting under Mick and Annie Jeacle's gazebo. Priya was also under the gazebo and Michael K and I were close by cooking up some mussels. The part owner of the caravan park came over for a chat and during the conversation the subject of cooking and dishes came up. Pat said "I do **all** the cooking and also **all** the dishes." The lady immediately turned to Priya and said "How do you get your husband to do all that!" The story grew as later in the day Pat and Priya were seen together in Pat's car driving up to Tathra –was this the 'honeymoon' trip? Later Priya was seen to be helping Pat into his wetsuit and diving gear at Merimbula Wharf. – no comment!, but this was the only dive Pat did on the trip – does he need a wife to assist him with his diving gear in his old age, or was he just out to impress his new 'wife'.*



PS. John, I do not think you have anything to worry about but it made a good story at the time

🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜
🐜 Don't take life too seriously; No one gets out alive 🐜
🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜🐜

GPS Conversions

by Lloyd Borrett (www.borrett.id.au)

There are many problems associated with locating dive sites using a GPS receiver. But first it helps if you understand the way the position is given.

Coordinates

Latitude and Longitude coordinates are usually given in degrees, minutes and seconds, sometimes with decimals of a second added. Many navigation receivers will give positions in degrees, minutes and decimals of a minute or as degrees, minutes and seconds. Take care which you use!

It is easy to convert seconds to decimal minutes — simply divide the seconds by 60. Thus if we have a latitude given as $38^{\circ} 12' 45''$ S (i.e. 38 degrees, 12 minutes, 44.7 seconds South), then we divide the 45 seconds by 60 to give .75. Thus this latitude is $38^{\circ} 12.75'$ S (i.e. 38 degrees, 12.75 minutes South).

To convert decimal minutes to seconds, simply multiply them by 60. So if we have a latitude given as $37^{\circ} 15.5'$ S (i.e. 37 degrees, 15.5 minutes South), then we multiply the .5 minutes by 60 to give 30. Thus this latitude is $37^{\circ} 15' 30''$ S (i.e. 37 degrees, 15 minutes, 30 seconds South).

In passing it is worth considering what both 0.01 of a minute and a second (approx 0.017 minutes) represent on the Earth's surface. One hundredth of a minute is some 18.5 metres in latitude everywhere on the Earth. However the longitudinal distance varies — largest at the equator and reducing as we move towards the South or North poles. For example, it is about 12 metres in longitude in the South of England at 50° North, and some 9 metres in longitude in the North of Scotland at 60° N.

Similarly, a second is 1/60 of a nautical mile and thus it is about 30 metres in latitude, but some 20 metres in longitude in the South of England or some 15 metres in longitude in the North of Scotland. OK so far? Now it's time for considering the joys of datum.

Datum

The idea of a datum arises because the dry part of the world is lumpy. When surveyors use a theodolite to take measurements of angles and various instruments to measure distances, they need some way of calculating the results. For small areas (for instance when setting out a supermarket building) it is fine to assume that the earth is flat. We have all done some trigonometry at school and the formulae are relatively simple. (Does anyone remember the sine and cosine rules?)

Now on a bigger scale, say over Australia, things get a bit more complicated. Clearly the lumpy surface of the real world is too complicated to use for calculation and the Earth is not flat so another shaped surface has to be used. Take a sphere, roughly the size of the earth. Squash it along the North/South direction and wiggle it a bit to get the best fit over Australia. Bravo! Keeping it simple, you now have a datum. Calculations on this curved surface are complicated but possible.

Zones

Different shaped spheroids are used over different parts of the world by various mapping agencies and they have changed over time. Because Australia is so large, our charts used different datum over different zones of the country. Zones cover a much larger area than a single page in a Street Directory and are numbered according to a world wide convention.

Australia is covered by 30 zones in the Universal Transverse Mercator grid system. Each zone is referred to by:

- A number (49 to 56) to refer a region of longitude which is 6 degrees "wide",
- A letter (G, H, J, K, L) to refer to a region of latitude which is 8 degrees "high".

Victoria is covered by zones 54H and 55H. Melbourne, Port Phillip Bay and all point East are in zone 55H.

Within each zone a Cartesian coordinate system is used to specify a location in units of metres.

The East-West coordinate is called an "Easting". It is referenced to the central meridian of longitude (i.e. 3 degrees from each boundary), where it has a value of 500,000 metres.

The North-South coordinate is called a "Northing". In the Southern hemisphere the 0 value is referenced to the latitude which is 10,000,000 metres South of the equator. This means that Northings in Australia have values of several million metres.

A typical set of fully specified coordinates are E 578315, N 5789240, UTM Zone 54H, Datum GDA94.

OK so far? Let's move on.

GPS Datum

Charts of our coastal area have always been on our own Australian Geodetic Datum as this was convenient and prior to the advent of satellite navigation systems it did not matter. However GPS is a global system and the squashed sphere that

a good fit in Australia is not the best fit to the real, lumpy surface over the whole world. So a revised, squashed sphere was invented. It is known as the World Geodetic System 1984, or WGS84 for short. (Logical to call it WGS when it fits the world.)

The trouble is that this squashed sphere does not match up with the old Australian Geodetic Datum and the Australian Map Grid based on it. So there is a difference in apparent position for the same point on the Earth's surface when you go from one to the other. This has caused some problems to those not familiar with the idea of applying shifts to the position displayed on the GPS received.

UTM Datums and Map Grids in Australia

Australia now uses the GDA94 datum (Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994) for latitude / longitude and the MGA94 map grid (Map Grid of Australia 1994) for UTM coordinates. This supersedes the AGD66 (Australian Geodetic Datum 1966) and the AMG66 map grid (Australian Map Grid 1996), and their very similar counterparts AGD84 and AMG84 which were used in some parts of Australia.

The change in map grid results in UTM coordinates moving about 100–200 metres to the North-East, so it is important to always specify the datum when recording or publishing UTM coordinates.

GDA94 is the same as the WGS84 (World Grid System 1984) for most practical purposes. The differences are of the order of a few centimetres.

For Australian GPS users this means that they should switch the datum / grid on their GPS receivers from AGD66 (Aus Geoid '66) or AGD84 (Aus Geoid '84) to use WGS84/GDA94, and replace their old topographic maps with new ones which are being updated and published with the new map grid. Then no correction to position will be necessary prior to plotting.

Datum Differences

It is important that if you're using charts to get dive sites locations, or obtaining locations from others, you need to consider the datum being used and adjust accordingly. Failure to do so means that you may be around 180 metres from the dive site, everything else being accurate.

Let's work through an example. Say someone gave you the coordinates of a wreck as 34° 08' 21" S and 151° 09' 02" E. The datum used for those coordinates was the old Australian AUS66/AUS84. But, then you use the new Australian GDA94 or World WGS84 datum on your GPS as you hunt for the site. You would be 105.1 metres south and 190.9 metres to the west of the wreck. In a straight line, this would make you 218.2 metres south-west of the wreck. So

you can see how important it is that you use the right datum when using GPS.

The coordinates using the GDA94/WGS84 datum for the example wreck site would be 34° 08' 15.3" S and 151° 09' 06.2"E. But unless your GPS is using that datum as you head for the wreck, you still won't find it.

Datum Conversion

On many GPS units you can use the unit itself to do datum conversions for you.

- Change the datum on your GPS to the one being used for the coordinates you have been given (e.g. AUS66/AUS84/AGD84).
- Create a waypoint and enter the GPS reading you were given.
- Change datum back to what you normally use (e.g. GSA94/WGS84).
- The waypoint should now have changed to the correct reading for use with your GPS.

There are also free software programs you can download and use to do the conversions for you.

GPS System Errors

So you think that you are going to find the dive site? Ah, it is not yet that simple. Remember that there are errors in the GPS system. Some small ones are inherent with cheaper units but for a long period the accuracy of the GPS system was deliberately degraded by the USA using a process called "Selected Availability".

The quoted accuracy of the system was then 100 metres for 95% of the time. So for over an hour a day it could well have been outside 100 metres. On 1 May 2000, the US Government finally switched off the "Selective Availability" and raw GPS positions are now accurate to about 10 metres at the worst for 95% or more of the time.

Differential GPS allows virtually all errors to be removed, both for the older degraded positions and for the current un-degraded system. Differential GPS positions should be good to a few metres.

Do remember that all GPS positions are that of the receiving antenna, not for the echo sounder transducers!

Still not found the dive site?

Observation Accuracy

In addition the dive site had to be positioned too, usually by some vessel sounding over the top. However, this vessel had positioning errors as well and

the size of these errors, despite the best efforts of those aboard and always assuming that no gross mistake was made, will depend on the navigation system employed.

For modern work the dive site position will be good to probably 10 metres, but for old work it could be 50 to 100 metres. Many records of dive sites, wrecks etc. are based on positions reported by other divers, a sinking vessel, members of the public, fishermen etc.

Often there is no way of knowing how accurate the report is (or was) and they have to be accepted at face value.

So if you are recording a site, use an average of the readings. Some GPS units have an averaging feature which can be set to record a certain number of readings over a period of time. The unit then provides an average reading which should, in theory, be more accurate than one recording. If you do not have this automatic feature, you can manually record a large number of readings and later average them out mathematically.

Perhaps you have found the dive site now?

CAUTION

MEN AT WORK



Women work all the time-
Men have to put up signs when they work.

" If ya narced and ya know it, clap ya fins "

THE EDESEL SAGA

PART 4

It had been ages since I did anything to Goulding's old boat. That sneaky little Fathoms Editor had published some personal emails which I'd planned to extrapolate into Part 3 of the Edsel Saga, so I was deliberately avoiding further work on the boat so I could punish him by not submitting an article for a couple of months.

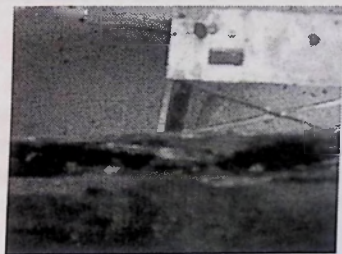
But, the wheels of progress must eventually roll on. At the end of August I became a martyr for the Union Movement (got the sack from the bank...) so lack of time could no longer be used as an excuse. That only left lack of motivation. Then the tiges went and clawed their way back to 9th and still missed the finals, so one dreary Saturday in September I took a six pack out to the garage, turned the radio onto the footy and decided it was high time I bashed something.



The idea behind the emails to John Goulding was to get an understanding of how the boat was constructed. Destruction (so to speak) might best be tackled in the opposite sequence to the way it was built. I only wanted to open the stern to get at the transom, so I sawed a couple of neat cuts into the gunwhales seriously expecting to be able to jack the stern up and off. That was my boat-builder mate's advice anyway, and it would have worked on any normal production boat. On closer inspection after the splashwell had been extracted it became apparent that the gunwhales and splashwell had definitely been designed as a permanent feature – a plywood base was joined to the hull by timber and screwed and glassed into place. A big 2x4 oregon beam running across the stern was still as

solid as the day it was installed.

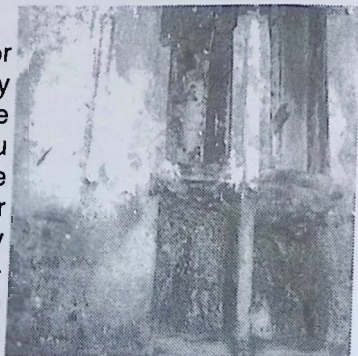
The timber in the transom however, was totally and utterly rotted out. The top edge had never been glassed in. It was only capped with an aluminium strip, so decades of water had got in there and slowly soaked its way down.



With room to work in the stern the next step was to start ripping up the floor. I soon learnt the folly of attacking it with a circular saw and went for the "safer" approach of cutting sections out with an angle grinder instead. After very nearly removing myself from the gene pool I learnt

that when you're kneeling on the floor your knees should be at right angles to the grinder and you'd better grind away from your body. Those things can really run away from you! (Or rather towards you!)

It seemed a pity to cut up the floor because it was actually in pretty good nick. There was just a couple of square feet of "softness" – you wouldn't even call it rot. And the fibreglass layers they'd rolled over it way back then still stuck pretty well. Below the floor was a different story. As you can see from the photos, all of the oregon stringers are still solid, but the fibreglass



cloth has rotted off and started to disintegrate. On the port side there is a thin bit of timber supporting the port "pontoon" part of the hull, and it had rotted and lifted, which is why my boat builder

mate was able to convince me to lift the floor in the first place.



So, for about 6 weeks the wheelie bin got crammed full of bits of plywood, fibreglass and cockroaches. The under-floor flotation consisted of foam blocks that seemed to be just a little too heavy for my liking. Sure enough, when I dropped one off the end of Frankston Pier it sank like a stone! Decades of soaking and maybe the occasional spill of petrol in

the bilge does horrible things to foam.

Since a few of the old crew have mentioned that the boat was always nose-heavy I'm assuming that the foam in the bow is waterlogged too, so I will be digging into it until I find dry foam. That area will then be glassed over and should make a nice little nook under the cuddy for a dive bin. Now that the floor is out I just need to grind out the fibreglass layer over the transom. That will make a template to cut a new sheet of 2" timber without having to stuff around with figuring out all the curves.

After all, there are plenty of other curves I'd rather stuff around with!

Rob Kirk



WARNING



SERIOUS INJURY CAN OCCUR. Due to the high performance capabilities of this vehicle, it is recommended that all female passengers remove their bras to prevent possible injury upon acceleration. Driver assistance is available upon request and is highly suggested. **THANK YOU**

TRUK 2006

Mark Harris asked if I would like to assist in producing part two of his documentary, "Silent Wrecks of Truk Lagoon", spending three weeks filming WW1 shipwrecks in Micronesia. So last 30 November, I was waiting at Cairns airport for the cruel 0135 am flight to Guam. We didn't panic when the 130 Japanese school kids lined up in front of us, after all, our flights were booked, weren't they? Continental staff told us they had overbooked, and one of us would have to wait for the next flight, in three days. Guess who stayed.

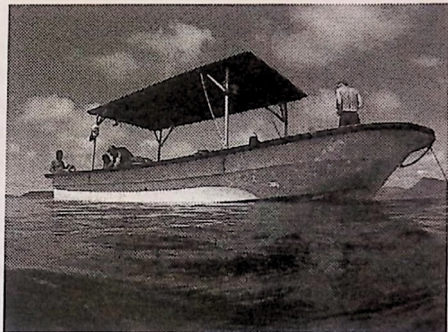
I was accommodated at the Cairns Colonial club, and spent the first day booking tours, and roaming around Cairns. Boring. The next day I went out to dive Thetford Reef with Tusa Dive. Vis was poor, and fish scarce, definitely not worth the \$200! The crew were great, and I had my own guide so I wasn't stuck with the other 20 divers. To finish the day they served Tim Tams as we motored back, but when I tried to bite one I realised they had come from the fridge, and caused some pain in a tooth. Day 3 and I was on a bus tour of the Daintree area, which included croc spotting on the river. OK, but a poor substitute for Truk!

Once again back in the queue for the 135 am flight to Guam, imagine my demeanour when I successfully got a seat, but was told one of my bags would go stand by! Problems solved, I joined Mark and his dad, Brian at Chuuk. Now lets clear this Truk/Chuuk thing, Chuuk is the name of the state, but Truk is still the name of the lagoon! As it turns out, the weather had been wind and rain for the past 3 days, and would be the same for the next 3 days. This didn't stop diving, but made good footage hard to obtain.

Our base was in the middle of the main city, Weno, at the Truk Stop Hotel, having comfortable, air conditioned rooms, and the dive operation on site. Weno is a dump, the main street has potholes and poor drainage, there is no garbage collection, and there are derelict cars everywhere. The cars come from Japan, as only cars less than 3 years old can be used in Japan, and are sold to Pacific Islanders for the transport cost, around US\$300. If a car requires repairs over \$300, it is cheaper to get a new one! We ate in the Hotels restaurant, which has good American style meals, which definitely expand your waistline!

Truk Stop has 2 dive boats, Bottom Lover, a 42 ft twin diesel cruiser, and

Fast Boat, a 24 ft Banana boat with twin 90 hp four strokes. As Fast Boat had fuel problems, even though we had small crews, we went out on the much slower Bottom Lover for the first 10 days, until it blew an engine. We then had to use Fast Boat, with a deckie constantly pumping a fuel bulb to keep the port engine going! It worked though, and we were able to push on with the filming schedule.



Over the three weeks of diving we visited the Kansho Maru, Nippo Maru, Gosie Maru, Kiyuzumi Maru, Fujikawa Maru, Hoki Maru, Heian Maru, Hanakawa Maru, Unkai Maru, Amagisan Maru, Momokawa Maru, Sankisan Maru, Hino Maru, Seiko Maru, Sanfrancisco Maru, I 169 Submarine, Suzuki Sub Chaser, Betty Bomber, Emily Float Plane, and Shark Island. The most surprising was the rarely dived Hanakawa Maru, which is a very similar dive to the Fujikawa Maru. As the Hanakawa is situated off Tol Island, a longer distance than most others, and the locals aren't that friendly, even our guides didn't really know what we would find. The holds were mostly full of drums, with a lot stuck to the



ceilings, and the engine room was quite cloudy, but there was plenty to discover in the superstructure, and the topside of the wreck was richly grown over with soft corals. The forward mast provided a spectacular deco station, and the huge school of trevally, which circled divers, will remain in my memory. So will the sore tooth I suffered with for the first two weeks!

The weather came good during the second week, but deteriorated for the third. Vis was poor on the wrecks in the repair anchorage, requiring many return visits to get the required footage. The SanFrancisco Maru was not on our schedule, but we made it a special dive to celebrate my 1000th logged dive. It truly is one of the best wrecks in the world, and still has a deadly amount of

ordinance in hold one. Mark got onto diving with twins on this trip, and loved it so much that he racked up 3½ hours deco on the Amagisan Maru! He didn't surface from his 2.00 pm dive until after dark, which made the trip back through the maze of coral reefs interesting! Vis varied from 5 to 30 metres, but all dives had some biological matter drifting by.



Nights were consumed reviewing the days footage, and transferring sequences for later editing. Planning the days shooting took place over breakfast, when we had an idea of the weather. Days where we required models were set up in advance, and everything was scripted. My role was more flexible, and after completing the planned sequences, I was free to explore and find new "points of interest". This meant a lot of solo diving. We aimed to keep to sites less than 50 metres deep, except for the blast hole on the Seiko Maru, and the holds on the San Fran. All dives were deco dives on air, so it was common to spend up to 3 hours submerged each day (more for Mark!).

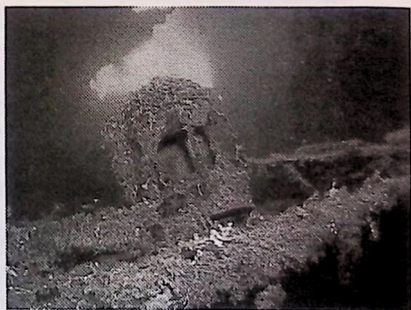
We had a day off near the middle of the trip, and a couple of days at the end to tour the local islands to film old Japanese buildings and infrastructure. Some of this required trekking through the jungle, in hot and humid conditions, thankfully there is no malaria, poison spiders, or snakes in Chuuk! We found some tunnels which Mark and Brian explored, as they had a torch between them, revealing generator sets and equipment still hidden inside the mountains. There are Japanese buildings everywhere, most now utilised by the Trukese, but many are bomb damaged.



The pressure was on in the last few days to complete the filming schedule, but we made it. It would have been preferable to be able to access a couple of the wrecks in better vis, but clever editing will sort that out. Truk is the wreck diving capital of the world, but I was ready to go home at the end of 3 weeks, so with a minor delay leaving Chuuk, we were back in Oz for an overnight stop in Cairns. Now my last trip turned sour when the flight from Cairns was cancelled with mechanical failure, and you can imagine my disgust when the same thing happened again! This time the problem was a faulty fire sensor in a luggage hold, which caused us to be disembarked, and wait a couple of hours before they came up with a solution. For some reason, everybody thinks I am a jinx with air travel and weather!

I got home in the early hours of the day after I was due, but I had made it! Mary got me up early so I could get all my clothes in the wash so we could start packing for our live-a-board trip on Jervis Bay. But that is another story of bad weather!

Alan Beckhurst



THE "BACK BEACHES" VSAG DIVE REPORT SUNDAY DECEMBER 10TH

JL

The day started out full of great expectations for the two crews who had booked in for the back beaches cray bash. Mick Jeacle and I had nominated our boats for the day and 8 divers booked in. Great weather and the prime requisite for back beach diving...a North wind for a few days to flatten the southerly swells. Perfect!

Mick's crew: Barry Truscott, Greg Richards, Mick Kakafikas

7.00 AM

I generally do a quick boat check from a "check list" before departing home for a day's diving or fishing and all checks were sound until I noticed the motor had a lean to port.

Trying to straighten the Yamaha resulted in the steering wheel spinning freely around and no movement to the power steering! Bugger!!

Phone calls to my designated crew followed with advice that, with regret, we were not going diving from my boat today.

I unloaded my dive gear from the boat to the 4WD and decided to try for a charter dive, making the calls from the hands free on the way. By the time I'd reached Aspendale it was clear I was not even going to get on a charter dive so I returned home.

7.45AM

Back on the boat I started to play with the steering again and after plying the steering wheel back and forth for several minutes the system "grabbed" and the power steering activated..wow..a miracle! (it later turned out that there was no oil in the steering wheel bowl...had just been serviced a week ago!!!)

Onto the mobile again.. "the dive is back on guys..see you at Sorrento 9.30...Tom and James Hill at Queenscliff" Call to Mick for the new update.. "See you on the water after all"

8.15AM

Loaded the scuba gear back into the boat...hooked up and off to Sorrento..made it by 9.30!

My crew: Lloyd Borrett Alan Storen, James Hill, Tom Hill.

With both crew pickups done and PFD's secured we were out through the RIP and on our way to meet up with Mick and his crew who were around 10 kms east of the heads.

Mick had two divers down on our arrival... Lloyd and I got the win for the first dive..we decided to dive close to the low water shore line and we found the territory was full of ledges and gullies...abalone was plentiful but the crays were not. Can't win all the time.

Lloyd saw the ray that I swam over..I didn't but then my focus was on other more important fish! Great dive!

Time for Tom and James in next...moved on to another area close by...both were pleased with the area..abalone and also no crays.

Alan's dive was next and he decided to move back into the tip of the little bay and seemed hardly to move much,which could have been a good indication that he may be extracting a cray...whilst all this was going on I was noting the weather slowly building up from the south...in just minutes it changed from relative calm to building wells..time to action a safety plan and extract Alan..three revs of the motor and Alan was up and into the boat.

Mick had also read the wind change warnings and was on the radio "time to go JL".

We raced back west and through the rip into the relative safety of the bay..Both boat crews decided that not enough diving had been had so a drift dive was agreed on..Lloyd and I on one line and the Hill duo on another....Alan was obliging and offered to handle our boat.

The normal pace of the current mid tidal change was not as strong as we had expected so the drift was very leisurely... at one point in the journey we stopped mid water with no movement whatsoever...like stopped dead! Regretfully the taking of Abalone from the bay is not allowed which is a bugger as we must have passed over ten huge greenies in our 40 minute dive.

All back safely onto the boat and off home after a great VSAG club dive day... thanks to the crew on Signature One for great company and great diving fun.

Additional Comments:

The inner back beach diving is generally conditional on the swells if diving is to be conducted close to the shore lines...this is best done when the North wind has been up for a day or two as to flatten the swells produced by the Southerly wind which is the predominant Melbourne wind...so the opportunity to dive when this is the situation is generally grabbed. There is a theory that Crays come in from the deeper waters late in the year and the near shore ledges provide a shelter for them... On his dive Barry did see a couple of biggies in the deep ledges and managed to bag a small Cray, however the area we all dived in was a fair bit Spartan when it came to bagging Crays in legal numbers.

Away from cray hunting, the inner shore territory can be really spectacular with big undercuts, overhangs, beautiful colour and a myriad of fish life. As it is quite rare to get close into shore the diving is always a great experience and as the water is not deep the bottom time stretches out which can be up to an hour....great diving!

It's a bit like the advice Rex Hunt has given fishos "when the barometer rises, grab your fishing gear and go fishing" ...so with diving when the Northerly has been blowing, head for the back beaches!

VSAG to Knawsome Reef or Magic by any other name. A Tale of two cities?.

Greg Richards

It was the best of days, it was the worst of days. Saturday the 20th Jan 2007 was meant to be the best day of an ordinary weekend. Low temperatures, windy, cloudy with drizzle turning into rain, and then turning nasty in the afternoon and staying that way through to Monday.

With this scenario 2 boatloads of vastly different VSAGers took to the water in search of the elusive perfect dive.

Boat 1 was filled with an eclectic mix of high brow intellectuals, professional business people and retired managing directors. The conversations were on a diverse range of topics always with intelligent thoughtful and often insightful responses. It was debated civilly amongst them as to the merits of a short black over a latte.

Boat 2 was the home of the working class stiffs. Half the boat was currently unemployed and the other half were common labourers. Conversations on-board were mainly limited to mono syllabic grunts and the only real discussion of note, was a shouting match about whether or not anybody who drank Tooheys Red was a poofter.

The skipper of Boat 1 decided to dive the aptly named Knawsome Reef, whilst the other boat settled for the equally impressive Magic Reef, some 200meters distant.

As slack water was fast approaching all haste was made so that all concerned could experience at least some part of the slack.

As befits a boatload of the intelligentsia , over on Boat 1 all was going according to plan. It was agreed to set up a focus group to investigate the tidal streams and shipping movements. They then set bottom time parameters, set goals, outlined a strategy and formulated a fail safe position for the dive to take advantage of the window of opportunity that was currently presenting itself.

On the other boat it was every man for himself. The first two in the water had to re-enter the boat when it was noted that one of the divers had forgotten his fins and subsequently his partner, in assisting him, lost his weight belt. A third man then hastily threw his antique, poorly maintained gear together, and elbowed his way into the water.

With the first batch of divers in the water the remaining crew members lounged around in the boats and waited for their turn. Over on Boat 1 the vigilant crew discussed the more portentous issues concerning our fragile environment whilst all the while diligently assembling their gear in a most professional manner. From across the water they just hear the muffled raucous roar regarding bikini's, beer and the best Pub in Frankston.

As the first of the divers began appearing, it became apparent that the water visibility was an excellent 60-70 ft and slack water was still with them. Large crayfish had been sighted, and in one case liberated from underwater servitude. Fish life was extremely profuse and varied, and the terrain exceptionally good. The 2nd crews' wasted no time in donning gear and hurtling into the briny. After another 20-30 minutes all had successfully completed the dive and it was off to Popes Eye for lunch.

One diver reported that " if I never dive again after this dive – I will die a happy man..." The consensus amongst the group was that he was smack on the money. This dive was as good as it gets- any where!

Now, the more observant of you out there may have picked up on the fact that the 2 boats had a very different class of divers to each other. This was never more obvious than in the choice of preferred meal for lunch.

On Boat 2, cheap tinned tuna (sans biscuits), stale sandwiches and in one case cold dim sims, were on the menu. All washed down with mass produced cola drinks (probably containing Bourbon) . Whereas, on the good ship "Cerebral": turkey, and chicken, with fresh salads (with a light balsamic vinegar dressing) all accompanied with the finest in Herbal teas was the main course. Had it been appropriate a good bottle of White Wine would have been

ZOO Twilights

A night to remember!



Come and enjoy an evening music concert at the Melbourne Zoo. Spend an afternoon visiting the animals.

Sunday 18th March 2007

- Band:** BABBA, an ABBA tribute band (see www.babba.com.au)
- Concert timings:** 6.30 to 9.00 pm
Door opens: 4.30 pm
- BYO:** food, drink and blanket (low chair if you wish*)
Cost: \$30.00 per adult (concession \$22.50, Kids \$15.00 yrs 4-15)

Booking and Payment:

- Ticketmaster: ph. 136 100, www.ticketmaster.com.au or outlets
- Melbourne Zoo gate on the day (if there are any tickets left)

For further information, please contact Priya on 03 9758 8423 (H), or visit the Melbourne Zoo web site at www.zoo.org.au/melbourne.



Note:

- Cost includes zoo entry all day, so come early and enjoy the animals.
- Melbourne Zoo animals can be viewed until 7.30 pm.
- Special talks by animal keepers are available (e.g. seals at 4.30 pm)
- Food and beverages can be purchased also at the zoo.
- *Higher rise chairs (i.e. deck chairs - may have to sit in a designated chair area).

quaffed, but that would have ended the days diving, so it was not to be.

Whilst at the "Eye", several members of both boats decided to spend a little time exploring the Marine Park and despite the inward current all enjoyed the experience. One diver reported being bitten on the head several times by Leather-jackets and will possibly wear a hood next time.

With black clouds looming ominously and the predicted wind change starting to fire up the skipper of Boat 2 after a quick word with his vacuous deckie, decided to head straight for the Rye Pub and abandon all further diving for the day. As they left they were heard to yell something out that due to the wind couldn't be heard properly from the other boat, but it sounded like " Lets get the duck out of my ear.."

The Skipper of Boat 1 chaired a roundtable discussion where it was postulated that they set up a working party to investigate the merits of having another dive, devise a suitable strategy and set a dead line to report back to the skipper inside 3 ½ minutes. The decision was made and successfully ratified by the Board. They set sail to do the Sponge Garden Drift dive before the weather worsened.

With the skipper keeping a professional and vigilant eye on all concerned the entire crew of 4 descended on the one line and had an extremely relaxing and enjoyable dive. The weather was still threatening, but not really getting too bad, as they finally headed back to base.

On the way home the Bay was a mass of white caps and by Sunday it was a veritable maelstrom. The decision to change the dive from Sunday to Saturday was a stroke of pure genius.



"Never get so busy making a living you forget to make a life"

Web Site Report

By Lloyd Borrett

The new VSAG web site (www.vsag.org.au) is now fully operational. 43 people have registered to use the web site. However of these, only 12 have been identified as VSAG members and added to the VSAG Members group.

VSAG Members Group

The web site enables us to assign registered users to various “groups” and then control access of those groups to various web site features. One such group is “VSAG Members”. Members of this group have access to web site pages, forums and features not given to the general public. Thus as a VSAG Member, it is important that you are made a member of the “VSAG Members” group on the web site. To check this, please login to the web site, then under “Registrant options” in the left menu, click on “Members Groups”.

When the next page is displayed, select “VSAG Members” in the drop down box and click on “View Information”.

If your details aren't included in the list of Group Participants, then please click on “Join Group” to send a request.

Web Site Changes

Some of the changes since the last Fathoms report include:

- **Photo Gallery** — Some members have started to upload photos into their own photo galleries. Rob Kirk has written an excellent guide, “Managing Images 101”, on how to prepare your photos for uploading to the VSAG web site. This article can be downloaded from Downloads > VSAG.
- **Honour Board** — The honour board, life members and committee pages were updated.
- **Members Only** — A number of pages have been added to the Members Only section including a Committee notice on Dive Boat Contributions, plus our Dive Standards and Procedures.
- **Downloads** — I purchased some scuba service and maintenance manuals from a US source and along with them came a CD-ROM full of useful files, including the US Navy Diving Manual. Many of these files have been added to the web site for downloading.
- **Links** — The links directory has been significantly expanded with many more

links being added. If you have some links that you think are missing, please feel free to add them.

- **Encyclopedia** — More entries have been added to the Scuba Diving Encyclopedia. If you have additions, corrections, or suggestions for this, please email them to me at lloyd@borrett.id.au
- **Surveys** — A new survey was added to gauge people's opinion on how they feel about sharks.
- **Weekly Newsletter** — The weekly newsletter, sent out every Sunday by the web site to those subscribed, was enhanced to include additional information. The web site automatically generates this newsletter, which has in it links to the latest news articles, downloads, links, diving forum posts and photos gallery pictures, plus upcoming events. This helps you to stay up-to-date with what is happening on the VSAG web site.

Old VSAG Web Site — We were successful in accessing the old VSAG web site and changing it such that these pages now redirect to the new VSAG web site. Thus all existing links in search engines and link directories now resolve to the new web site.

News Items

It is great that people have begun to submit News items for publication on the web site's front page. Thus the web site is becoming the most up-to-date source for VSAG news, especially as to what is happening on upcoming dive days.

Please note that the news items you submit don't go live straight away. They have to be checked and approved by a web site administrator first.

In general, it's also appropriate to create a new topic in the appropriate diving forum for most news items. These posts do go live immediately.



"Hand me the hairdryer"



Happy Divers January 2007

