

# FATHOMS

**JUNE-JULY 2007**

**VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP**



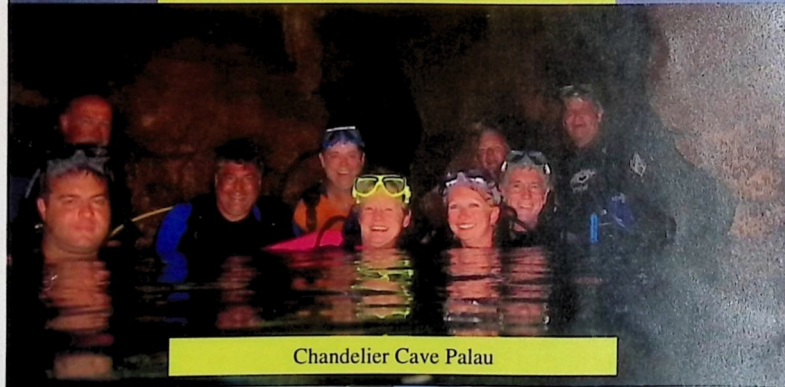
[www.vsag.org.au](http://www.vsag.org.au)

Postal Address: VSAG  
224 Wattle Valley Road  
Camberwell VIC 3124





Departing Guam



Chandelier Cave Palau



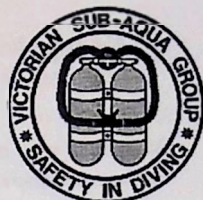
Scenes from Palau Trip May 2007



Palau Trip 2007



# FATHOMS



*Official Journal of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group*

*In this June July issue...*

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**VSAG General Meetings**  
3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday in the month

**Editorial Submissions to:**

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## Editorial

*Winter is well and truly here with water temperatures dropping considerably. This has not stopped the VSAG divers as you will read of their many dives over recent times. Some also escaped to the North with dives at Norfolk Island, Palau, Guam and Bali being reported on in this edition.*



*Those that went on the club trip to Palau/Guam missed out on an excellent presentation at the May general meeting and from what I hear it had record attendance. Lloyd has reported on that meeting on page 10 and I thank JL for chairing the meeting in my absence.*

*SDFV has arranged another SUNKEN ASSETS and details are on Page 18. Please put this date in your diary as it promises to be as fantastic as ever.*

*Our Christmas in July function is on Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> July and bookings must be made with Priya asap.*

*We have another great speaker for the June meeting with Terri Allen, CDAA Publications and Records Director presenting on cave diving. Please make an extra effort to attend.*

*Many VSAGers also stayed at Boarfish Lodge in Queenscliff for the Queen's Birthday weekend and I thank Mary and Alan for their hospitality. With 10 divers and 3 non-divers the lodge was full. We also had Peter Briggs and Alen Dickerson join us out on the water on Sunday – another brilliant weekend – great diving, great company, great entertainment (Mary and Alan's videos and slides), great weather, great touring (the fort and for the non-divers the shops and market) and great food.*

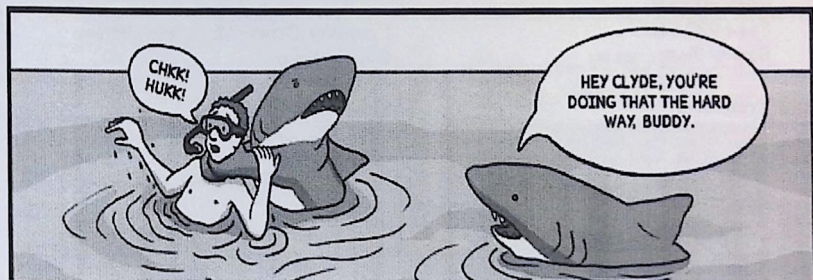
*Despite the water temperature the diving in the bay and around the Heads is fantastic at the moment and you should all book in for a dive to check it out for yourself. Get in before the dredging!!*

*The Canberra is coming – watch this space!!*

*Remember: There is nothing that a good day of diving won't cure.*

*Cheers*

*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



## Easter at The Prom 2007 : The Perfect Weekend.

*After the bestial conditions of last year, it was with some trepidation that I booked in for a site at Tidal River this year. After all, sitting soaking wet, cold, drunk and sexually confused in my crappy little 5 man tent for 4 days again, did not get me all that motivated. Approaching the Thursday, the weather forecasts started looking up, and then progressively looked better. It was looking good. Real good.*

*A large number turned up Thursday night and got things off to a rollicking start, so much so that Mick Jeacle was forced into dry dock for most of Friday with what appeared to be a cross between an upset tum- tum and a coma. The rest of us only drank modestly and awoke refreshed to see slight seas and only a moderate breeze. By this stage the Mary Malloy and Alan had turned up, which gave us 4 boats (although only 3 healthy skippers). Alan Beckhurst did his bit to garner support for a late morning departure, but sadly Dive Captain Extrordinaire; Alan Storen, could only muster 6 divers and no pushers. Alas, a lay day was declared.*

*The rest of Friday was spent in idle pursuit of relaxation by the masses as gradually our sites filled up. Bikes were ridden, books were read, leisurely walks undertaken, and the paper was read from cover to cover. Personally I gave up by 2pm and cracked a can.*

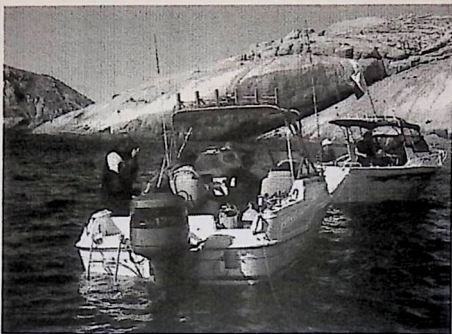
*Friday night was again a moving feast of parties all along the avenues, as old acquaintances were renewed and the newer faces were indoctrinated into the club culture of civilized riotous behaviour. Discussions took place regarding reforming the Band from last year but Mick K had left the didgeredoo*

*back home. He was prepared to compromise and use a piece of PVC pipe so as not to let his legions of fans down, however the only piece available had recently been a sewerage outfall pipe and was deemed too short.*

*Saturday morning arrived and all eyes turned to our Dive Captain. This time he had 20 divers jumping out their skins to get on the 4 boats. With a maniacal look in eyes he announced theatrically "It's Showtime...." Boats loaded and it was down to the beach for an unhurried and semi dignified beach launch.*



All 4 boats initially headed out the gap between the 2 main Glennies to check out the swell on the outside. After assessing correctly that it would be a tad sloppy, Andys boat & the Jeacle craft headed up to the Northern tip of Great Glennie. Freediver and Peter Briggs's 16ft Savage stayed at the Pinnacle and after diving there re-joined the others for lunch.



Now I don't know if you've ever had the experience of diving with the 3 non stop talking machines in VSAG, but I have to say its truly a once in a lifetime experience. I certainly don't want to do it again! And I was one of the offenders! Tipping the Loud Vs Tipping the Lucid, tag teaming with Puggsly Richards. I pity poor Lurch, as his eardrums were tortured to a level no man should have to endure by the cacophony. Perhaps this is where Phil Spector got the original idea for his famous "wall of sound" The diving was, as usual here, excellent, with 17c water temp and fair viz of I'd guess 40 ft max. This spot is home to some of the best caves and swimthrus going around, and coupled with the odd cray, many abalone and good fish life, it never disappoints.

Most of us had our 2<sup>nd</sup> dive in this general area and in my case I actually thought this to be even better than the 1<sup>st</sup>. Barry Truscott revealed his new secret weapon to keep his fingers warm and looking human after a dive, which was a most impressive looking re-usable chemical heat pack. Now if he could only keep the rest of him warm, and stop himself shivering like a dog shitting a razor blade, after every dive.

Andy spotted a monster 10lb cray and made quiet preparations to come back and get it later. A couple of reasonable sized crays were liberated, and the abalone population culled to the legal limit. In some cases they were 2 and 3 deep in certain ledges and all a good size.

After retrieving the boats some of us headed for the camp site only to be told all hands were required back at the boat ramp gate as the SS Jeacle had parted company from the trailer. After much animated discussion all pitched in and simply heaved it back on by brute force.

Saturday nite was a laid back affair with multiple dinner parties to wander to and from. Contrary to the rumour started by Trevor Williams, I did not simply wander from party to party simply to scab a free meal off all and sundry. I actually bought a foccacia from the shop with some gelatinous

muck in it that had once resembled clag. According to my dictionary the correct term for it is stercoraceous. (I suggest you look it up)

Meanwhile down the road the compressors were fired up and all thanks to Darren Pearce who towed them down, and then manned them till the wee small hours. I trust those who got fills from him have recompensed him appropriately.



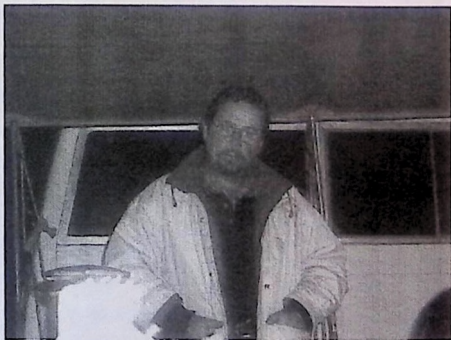
Over at the hippy commune, abalone in Ginger, shallots and fish sauce was being feasted on and copious amounts of the evil spirit consumed. Over at Martins place the annual Paella feast was taking place and as usual he managed to feed several hundred people.

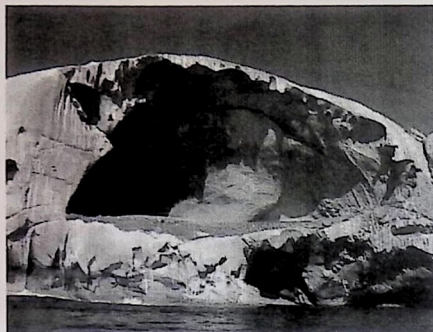
Mr Troubadour finally got his guitar out and started to sing in an attempt to draw Paul Tipping from his lair. Alas, the Ranger lady appeared ghostlike from the dark and suggested that some nearby person had rung her to complain about the noise. Despite this being an obvious lie and a load of absolute crap we decided to wait until Sunday to unleash our talents onto the world. We will not be stopped.

Sunday morning and the weather was looking even better. Peter Briggs decided to leave his boat in dry dock and dive from one of the other boats. This still gave us 3 boats and with other non starters, allowed a few different people to get out, and for a brief moment it even appeared Gerry DeVries would muster up the energy to come out. Sadly not.

Once again the boats were launched with minimal fuss and we set off towards the more southerly Islands. As is the norm, we didn't actually have a plan as such.

Just a vague ethereal concept that if we kept heading towards an Island then some bright spark would point and say "lets give over there a go!" After the Beckhurst boat shot some video of us zooming past the mountains, we decided to split up and 2 boats went to Wattle Island and the other to Skull Rock.





*I heard Prya and John on the radio suggesting that her dive wasn't much chop, but the place I dived was sheer magic. Great canyons, sensational sessile life forms and as many fish as I need to see in any one dive. Lots of abs, but no decent crays seen. Alan Storen and Bridie enjoyed a splash here and then*

*when we had our lunch break at the seals, they jumped back in for 15 minutes. The seals were literally jumping out of the water in their hundreds. This area is a no take zone and boys do the abs love it- they are dinner plate size.*

*After lunch and a guided tour thru the skull rock cave it was suggested to do a dive on the nearby island. The viz looked ordinary, and the directions over the radio as to where the actual "Cave " was to be found were a tad vague. Several groups found the depth and the current just too much to bear and gave up after a short time. Nobody on my boat has any desire to try it again.*

*It was time to fire up the Barbies for the final night. All the different family groups stuck together and the VSAG BBQ outdoor entertaining area was well frequented. A cleverly conceived plan finally saw the re-emergence of the bellowing barrister from Brunswick. As good as he was, he was outdone by the Celtic Crooner from South Frankston with his rendition of "Liberty Vallenge". The tone of the night was sealed by the tireless jaws of Tony Tipping who went to bed after telling us of his most recent proctological examination. Me thinks he should change doctors, preferably to a female.*



*New member Bridie gave up as the songs were older than her grandparents and Charlie Brincat never even turned up- he went to bed early and sent his missus over. Mick Kakafikas and some of his cosmopolitan eclectic bunch cruised in and out and finally the choir just sang themselves to sleep. Ah! Monday morning was here, and it*

was just getting better. No swell. No breeze and still no... Gerry DeVries! ( Sounds like a song for the VSAG songbook) Freediver was drydocked and heading for Queenscliffe and many were too busy packing to dive. Two boatloads set off as some packed and some chilled out. Remarkably we had a plan. Dive and be back by 1pm. Other details were a bit more hazy, but we managed to launch 2 boats and headed off to the Northern tip of Great Glenie Island.

Andy was determined to re-find his massive cray from Day 1 and had even GPS'd the exact spot. The rest of us had a dive a few hundred metres further around on the outside walls in 100ft of water and what a dive to finish off with. Sensational. Cindy was blown away with the caves and after the dive we took her to see the massing red jelly fish in the little bay on the inside of the Island.

Even Leo Maybus got in on the act and after we retrieved the last diver it was off at top speed to the beach. Before we knew it we were packing tents and most of us saying our goodbyes over fish and chips and a beer.

Well, I ask you; Was Easter at the Prom 2007 any good? I'll leave the last word to Pat Reynolds, who categorically stated that for him it was " a ball tearinglly good weekend"

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## **MothersDay – boarfish reef by Lloyd Borrett**

*Divemaster: John Lawler, VSAG*

*Boat: "Miles Ahead", John Lawler's 6.5m 175HP, Sorrento*

*We headed out early from Sorrento Boat Ramp to catch slack water. The dive was originally scheduled to be on Awesome Reef, but shipping movements forced us to switch to Boarfish Reef.*

*John Lawler decided to stay with the boat, so John Merlo, Bridey Leggatt and I kitted up and headed down. John was obviously hunting for crays, so Bridey and I worked to keep up with him while looking at the marine life everywhere. This certainly is a very delightful reef to explore.*

*I came across a large cuttlefish and spent quite a while playing with it. These are truly fascinating creatures.*

*The others signalled they wanted to ascend, so up we went.*

*We hadn't used all of the slack water period, so John Lawler decided to gear up and go in for a solo dive. He managed to catch a large crayfish.*

*With John back on board, we had lunch as we slowly drifted towards the heads.*

### **Castle rock**

*We decided to do Castle Rock as our second dive. John Lawler rang Tom Wende to get the marks, but we found a Dive Victoria boat on the site anyway.*

*They had about 10 divers down so we waited for them to clear the site. John Lawler was pretty sure he hadn't dived the site before.*

*Bridey Leggatt and John Merlo went in first. They were back fairly early reporting that the visibility wasn't that great and that there was strong surge. John Lawler and I decided to go ahead with our dive anyway.*

*When I turned on my air there was a loud hissing sound. So I checked the DIN connection. Still there. Started looking at everything else but all seemed okay. Eventually took off my hood and determined that the port where the second stage hooks up to the first stage of the regulators was loose. Thankfully John had a suitable spanner aboard and it was quickly fixed.*

*The others were right. The vis was very ordinary and the surge made things even less pleasant. John and I proceeded to do a circuit of the base of the rock checking out the marine life as we went. John then signalled that he was cold, so we ascended.*

*By now the water was very calm with only the large swells rolling through. We headed back in and just off of the Nepean Quarantine Station stopped to watch a pod of dolphins making their way up the bay. Bridey pointed out a mother with a calf.*

*On arrival at the Sorrento Boat Ramp we found the family of John Lawler's family there having some fun in their boat. John took those not on the water aboard and we took them out to join the others.*

*Once we'd retrieved the boat, changed and packed up our gear, Bridey, John Lawler and I headed into Sorrento to catch up with Tom Wende. Then it was on to The Scuba Doctor for air fills.*



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## Anzac day 2007

*On the 25th April 1915 the legend of the Anzacs was started. Over the course of the First World war in Turkey , France and Belgium the young men of Australia and New Zealand fought and died in despicable conditions we can barely imagine. We truly are indebted to them as a nation for their unimaginable sacrifices. Today, every April 25th we celebrate their heroism, their spirit and their memory with the annual Anzac Day Holiday. Some attend the dawn services, some the footy, others the RSL or play two-up. At VSAG we do a bit of all of the above, plus, a few of us go diving. An 88 year old WW2 veteran in today's Age says that the friendships you make in peacetime are nothing compared to the mateship you make in war. I haven't been to war, but I understand his sentiments. People whose very existence relies on their mates, form bonds that transcend anything in normal day to day living The same is just as apt for divers ,Arctic explorers or mountain climbers. It's not just a common interest that binds us together as buddies, it is the fact that when its all said and done, all of us rely on the the guy next to us to make sure we both come back alive. As a tribute to the way of life we enjoy, VSAG today conducted a dive expedition to the J 1 submarine. Sunk in 1926 after serving in the First World War, it today lies in 38m of water about 5 kms from the Rip. It is indeed a sombre reminder of the harsh reality of sea warfare. In all 7 divers dived both here and at the sponge gardens off Shortlands Bluff in mild conditions with only average to poor visablity. As we geared up to do the 2nd dive we paused to listen to the last post from the MCG over the radio. Truly, a moment to reflect. The dives were excellent, considering the ordinary visibility, and the general consensus after the dive at Sorrento Pub, was, 9 out of 10. Most of the patrons in the pub were only interested in the footy scores. I'd like to think that after a days diving we were only interested in each other and the bonds of true mateship. As a kid I trivialised Anzac Day as an irrelevant anachronism from the past. Now days, I see it for what it is, an essential reminder of what we were, what we are and a reminder of the sacrifices of our forefathers. We must never forget!*

*Shadow*



# ANZAC Day 2007

by BUBBLEDIVER (JL)

As one of the participants on the Anzac Day dive I share the sentiments of Shadow both in terms of the spirit of Anzac day and the comradre that the dive day gave to all who where there...

From the VSAG dive club point of view it was a brilliant day to say the very least..the diving was great and the planning by Mick Kakafikas in his first DC role was exceptional..ringing around to get divers to makeup boat crews is a lesson from the book of Alan Storen who generally goes to these lengths to find divers.

Gosh that brief time over e few refreshing ales in the Sorrento pub with the charter boat operator Tom Wende was the best end to a dive day ever!!!

May we have plenty of these days....



A friend is someone  
who thinks you're  
a good egg  
even though you're  
slightly cracked!

## Diving at Norfolk Island

Alan Storen

*Each year for the last 10 years, around about Easter, a group that calls itself the 'Easter Islanders' travels to a different island. I am the only scuba diver in the group so my first priority is to select an island with decent diving. This year the choice was Norfolk Island. I did some research and found a dive company on the island, always a good sign. Bounty Divers soon returned my email and I was booked in for a least a few dives.*

*I was surprised at the size of the island, I though that it was larger. It measured about 8km by 5km in distance and the locals told me it was about 4 minutes by 2 minutes rumour time. The population is about 1800 locals and 500 to 1000 tourists depending on season. The car population is about 3000! We were there for 9 days and found plenty of thing to do – walks, beach snorkels, museums, good eateries including a progressive dinner put on by local families and of course for me, Scuba Diving!*

*My first dive was at Emily Bay Kingston, followed by one at Point Hunter and then at Slaughter Bay. These three were similar with good coral reef and good marine life – several mosaic morays, gracious sea urchins, many varieties of nudibranchs, 'coral reef' fish and huge trumpeter and king fish.*

*There at two islands to the south of the main island called Phillip Island and Nepean Island – both very small. My next two dives were at Phillip Island at sites called South Rocks and Whales Hump. Both excellent dives with very good coral and fish life – again huge schools of large King fish and trumpeter. Both were also excellent 'muck' dives. The next dive was at Tomato Bay – a bay in Phillip Is. We dropped over the side and were not expecting much as the dive operator had not dived this site for a while and we were only able to get in due to the weather conditions being good. When we hit the bottom we were greeted by a Galapagos shark who swam over to check us out. Soon we had 30 sharks with similar intent and not much later we estimated over 100. The shop dive master took mega photos and when back in the shop we looked at one photo with nearly 40 sharks. We also saw several large turtles, and several banded snake eels. Did I mention the viz was over 30m (100ft) on ever dive and water temp about 24C.*

*The next dive was at Nepean Island at sites called Blues Cathedral(entrance) and Tradesman's Entrance (actually the exit for us). Another great dive with*

lots to see. A bit of current and several nudibrachs not in my book!

The next four dives were on the main island at sites called The Lagoon, Johney's Rock, Flat rock and Fig Valley. The pick was Johney's as it had some great caves- one with a chimney that rose to the surface from the middle of a cave at 20m. We were advised that this was not the way out as it narrowed significantly at it got near the surface and it had a current that would suck you up if you were not careful! Some good swim-throughs and good corals and fish life – huge rays, turtles, nudis, morays, etc made this an excellent dive. Fig Valley was not far behind and the marine life here was exceptional.



If you are planning to go to Norfolk Is book early with the dive operator and be prepared for some great diving. Other than the diving my advice is to hire a car – very cheap, one roundabout and no traffic lights and enjoy being a tourist! There is plenty to do and one week goes all too quickly.



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**SCUBA Divers Federation of Victoria**

*presentation of*

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Go to [www.sdfv.org.au](http://www.sdfv.org.au) for program and registration details

*Further information contact:- John (SDFV) 03 9764 2001 (hh)  
Cassandra (Heritage Victoria) 03 9637 9348 (bh)*



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# PLUNGING THE DEPTHS OF PERCEPTION AN EXERCISE IN EVENT MISMANAGEMENT



*Photo from [www.heraldsun.com.au](http://www.heraldsun.com.au) showing the position of the ship after the tide changed to flood. AB had originally seen it facing the other way and "much" closer to the pier*

The proposal by the Port of Melbourne Authority to conduct a multi-million dollar dredging operation to deepen the entrance to Port Phillip Bay has been supported by the Victorian Government, subject to ratification of a "satisfactory" Environmental Effects Statement.

As divers, we have seen at first hand just what a beautiful, vibrant and fragile environment the proposed dredging site is. I have travelled the world diving, and this area is the best I have seen anywhere. The Blue Wedges Coalition was formed to lobby against the proposal on environmental and economic grounds. The debate over the potentially devastating environmental effects has now dragged into its third year. Just like the Franklin Dam issue before it, this issue has become extremely political. However the crucial difference is that we divers can't chain ourselves to (gorgonia) trees. Well, we can. We just can't do it for very long.

My trusty long-time diving buddy, AB, is a skilled amateur marine biologist, underwater photographer/cinematographer and a tireless campaigner for the Blue Wedges. Through AB I have followed each and every development and event and stage-managed stunt with keen interest. Being an ex-public servant, ex-banker and ex-union rep I'm a self-confessed red-ragger from way back and I have never ceased to be amazed at how the enemy is continually able to baffle us with bulls%\$it and get away with it. And I don't use the term "enemy" lightly. They know who they are: Banks, governments, banks, politicians, banks, phone companies, banks and any other organisation of stakeholders with an agenda including various public corporations & port authorities. And banks.

In 2005 the apparently alleged light grounding of a container ship on a sandbar near the Heads was hushed up and spun beautifully to the Port of Melbourne's satisfaction. Total public apathy. When he told me about this I said to AB "That must NEVER be allowed to happen again! NEVER!! You live down there! You've got a bunch of cameras! If anything like that happens again GET THE EVIDENCE!!" He agreed that this was sound advice.

A little after 8am on Sunday January 7<sup>th</sup> 2007 I was rudely awakened by a call from one very excited

AB who was walking his dog along the beach near his home in Queenscliff. AB said he was looking at a cruise liner which, and I quote: "Must have run aground – it hasn't moved! I'm telling' ya it's only a couple of hundred metres off the Pilot Jetty!! Mate, there's not even 10 metres of water there! I tell ya, it's blowing a gale here and this thing's not moving an inch!! It's run itself aground for sure!! There's absolutely no angle on the anchor chain at all. It's just hanging there! Straight vertical. That proves it!!!" I also seem to recall claims like "This thing's *bigger than the Titanic!*" uttered at various times throughout the conversation.

My mind started to race as I sprang awake. This was the moment we'd been both dreading and anticipating. If the Port of Melbourne Authority can't stop the smaller ships from running aground, how can they possibly claim that bigger ships will be safe? They're deepening the channel – they're not widening much of it all, not in this area of the Bay anyway. "Sure", I thought, "They might be able to spin some bluster to poo-poo an alarmingly high percentage of groundings on their own computer simulations, but they won't be able to say much about an actual bona-fide genuine grounding in broad daylight!"

"And a *cruise* ship too! *You bewdy!* There's no shortage of witnesses on a cruise ship! Let's see the spin doctors weasel their way out of this one!"

AB said he'd rung everyone in the Blue Wedges and nobody else was around. He was on his mobile and was late for work at the Marine Science Centre. I immediately volunteered to take on the responsibility of informing the media. And inform I did!! "*STOP THE PRESS!!!*" Always wanted to say that.

Reactions from the media were mixed and varied from "So, this is news, how?" to "Oh yeah, somebody did mention something about that. Hmm..OK, maybe we'll check it out." Channel X were the only ones to really show an interest and their Chief of Staff did actually promise me that he'd call AB back. I secretly prayed that he'd get a much calmer and more coherent eyewitness account than I did.

Soon I get another call from AB. He still hasn't heard back from anyone who could coordinate the response! Oh My gawd!! The tide is turning to flood and we're going to let this chance literally float away *just like last time!!* So, there was nothing else for it – my home office became the nerve centre for the cause! I worked my laptop, Internet connection, phones and advanced standard of communication and sales skills to the limit! It felt good to get the ol' blood pumping through my veins again!

I researched all the information I could get my hands on. I downloaded the chart of the area and from AB's description over the phone I plotted the ship's position. "I reckon you're right AB - *it must be just about on the edge of the 8 metre line!*"

In a very short time my beloved internet revealed the ship to be the MV *Statendam* of the Holland Amerika Line, 55819 tons, due at Cunningham Pier in Geelong at 0700 that morning. No mention anywhere of its draft, but I reckoned it had to be at least 6 or 7 metres and that whatever its draft it would be too deep to safely be sitting in only 8 metres with any margin for safety.

Another call from AB at the kiddie's pool at the Marine Discovery Centre: "I was just thinking. I don't reckon it's showing anything at the masthead. Can you check the regulations for me? It's meant to have day-markers showing. It'll be either one black ball if it's anchored, or 3 black balls if it's aground. Mary's going down to the pier with a camera – can you ring her and get her to have another look? I gotta help little Stacey here with this sea cucumber..."

“Great!” I thought. “He can’t get anyone else to help so he’s had to get his wife to go down there. Oh well, at least we’ve got a pair of eyes on the scene, even if I do have to stuff around explaining to her what she’s meant to be looking for”

I rang Mary and sure enough – no balls at all. “That’s a flagrant disregard of international maritime law!” I explained to her. “It’s very suspicious!”

Silently I wondered, “Is the Port of Melbourne aware of that? *You bet they are!* The Pilot Service is on their payroll. Well - that’s very convenient! Perhaps the Pilot has *accidentally forgotten* the signals?”

My train of thought derailed when I got yet another call from AB. “It’s all over. Forget it. Channel X have told me that they’ve checked with the Port of Melbourne and they say the vessel is just resting”.

I spat. “Yeah, well, they WOULD say that wouldn’t they!” My train was back on track.

I started to pace the room. I told Alan that I couldn’t believe the naivety of the media. “They just can’t see the *big picture* here! This whole dredging issue is a public scandal *and they couldn’t care less!!*”

“Yeah, well, he says he’s got a responsibility to stick to the facts”

Facts? FACTS!!! OK then! They want facts - we’ll give ‘em facts!

“AB, dude, ya just gotta get that boat of yours in the water and check this sucker out once and for all! Whaddya mean it’s too windy? We’ve been out in worse!! No divers? Mate, you don’t need divers! All you need is GPS and depth sounder data for court!! Marine Discovery Centre??? Well for *chrissakes* AB, if you’re the only one there just lock the bastard up and get your boat in the water!! You *wimp!!!* You want that f&#\$\$% dredging to actually happen do ya?? TRAITOR!! Get your goddamn arse the hell out there!!! What’s more important to you AB – saving the Heads or playing in the touchy-feely tank? *What the hell is wrong with you?!?!*”

Now I knew exactly how Patton felt. I paced the room. What do they mean “just resting”? If there hasn’t been any balls-up then why aren’t there any balls up? Surely it goes deeper than this! And then it hit me. The Dutch connection!! If the Holland-Amerika line has any interests in the “Queen of the Netherlands” dredging ship...if we can find any link back to the Port of Melbourne Authority....

Another call from AB: “I’ve just heard from Mary. *THEY’RE LOWERING THE BOATS!!!*”

I frantically typed out an email to the Chief of Staff at Channel X to present him with all the evidence, conspiracy theories and my personal suspicions of skull-duggery afoot. Yes, I suppose, in hindsight I guess, maybe it could potentially be argued that there is a slight chance that my email may perhaps be misconstrued as me telling him how to suck eggs.

As this literary grenade wormed its irretrievable way through the internet I got another call from Mary. “Well, it looks like they’re just taking on a couple of passengers. They’ve set up a table on the pier and there’s a couple of customs guys and all this luggage is being piled up. It’s all pretty relaxed here, actually. One of the guys reckons the captain just decided to stay here rather than going down the West Channel in this wind.”

**"But I thought they were lowering the life boats?"**

**"Yeah. ONE boat. For the passengers! Like, d-uhhh...."**

I fell headlong onto the couch. "Do you mean to tell me that there's a perfectly innocent explanation for this after all?"

She started.

**"Yes, I guess that makes sense Mary but... Well, yes, you might have a point there Mary, yes, I can see it would be prudent for a large vessel to stay out of a narrow channel in high wind conditions. But... Yeah, actually you might be right there Mary. Yes, now that I think about it Mary, I guess they'd have to anchor at the very edge of the main channel for other ships to get past, But... What's that Mary? You can see why the ship isn't moving? How's that Mary? Tide going one way, wind going the other way? Hmmm...could be... Yes. Of course Mary. Yes, I think you're right Mary."**

In a last gasp, clutching at straws now with a last word in edgeways I ventured: "But hang on a minute Mary! If all that's right why is the anchor chain just hanging vertical? Eh? Well, yes. I guess that makes sense Mary. Yeah....I suppose a big anchor chain would be just a tad heavy... Hmmm. That's good ..thinking...Mary..."

My voice trailed off as every cell in my over-worked brain and exhausted, sleep deprived body sickened at the realisation voiced by the fearful thought of "Oh no. Here it comes."

*"So! Are you satisfied with that? Can my husband get back to work now? Can I stop wasting my day standing around freezing my butt off at the end of this stinking pier???"*

I felt like a complete and utter dope. It was all for nothing. AB and me had basically sold each other a pup and had a bunch of kittens in an extreme case of mutual wishful thinking.

**But it wasn't entirely my fault, and I made the mistake of I telling her so.**

*"I'm surprised at both of you!"*

I thanked Mary for her efforts and she hung up with the digital mobile phone equivalent of slamming the receiver back on the hook. Burying my face in my hands I wept bitter tears of defeat until 47 years of deep-rooted mistrust of authority rebelled against this pathetically abject surrender. *It's a set up!! It's a stunt!! They're all in on it! They're doing this so they can justify the deepening for the tourism industry!!!*

I leapt up from the couch like a man possessed! There was only one thing for a good and honest and decent man to do!! I crawled back to bed and took my medication.

Rob Kirk





*Boating Industry Association  
of Victoria*



# **2007 Club Marine Melbourne Boat Show**

**Thursday 5 to Monday 9 July**

Melbourne Exhibition Centre  
Clarendon Street, Southbank

**Over \$40,000 in prizes to be won!**

**Savage 500 Beachcomber Bowrider, Mercury OptiMax outboard, Dun-  
bier custom-fitted trailer, Navman electronics and more.**

- Over 130 exhibitors
- Waterskiing demos (Saturday & Sunday)
- Special guests, giveaways & free entertainment
- Expert advice & speakers
- Boat licence testing
- Flathead Fred's Fun Fishing Show
- Children's activities
- Rock climbing wall
- FREE boat handling course with every boat sold

## **Ticket Prices:**

Adults \$17 Students & pension concession

Card holders \$12 (with ID)

Family (2 adults and their children) \$40

## Palau: A Little slice of Heaven.....

Wed 10<sup>th</sup> May 2007: A terse and hostile email came thru my computer at 2.30pm from the Corporate Financial Controller. He wanted urgent answers about a serious breach of company credit policy, and he wanted them now! Someone's guts were going to be garters by the end of the week and if I stuck around I knew they find out it was me that perpetrated the deed. Being a good corporate citizen I quietly closed down the computer and at 2.34pm strolled to the front door and waved good-bye to my fellow employees with the slightest hint a smile. I was going to Palau and they could all kiss their flabby white asses.

The following day was a blur of flights into and then out of Sydney, into and then out of Cairns. Then just after 5.00 am into Guam and then suffer the indignity of the US Customs and Immigration charade. I was knackered and still didn't feel as if I was on holidays. Finally around dawn on Friday the 15 strong VSAG crew fell into the Days Inn beds and crashed.

I awoke around 7.30 and wandered down to reception and organized a lift to the beach. A 30 min swim/ snorkel amongst the corals and fish did me wonders, and on returning to the motel found all still asleep and so I ventured to the café to try the local fare. I never realized how appealing a 10 sec fried egg could be. The others straggled down over the next 2 hours and I decided to let them find out for themselves that our idea of cooked and their idea of cooked are somewhat at odds. Butter too- it looks like cream, spreads like milk and tasted like snot.

We were due to fly out later that day, and we split into 3 groups and did a spot of touristy things to pass the time of day. I had a guided tour of the southern half of Guam and lunch Chamorro style at Jeffs Pirate Shack. The tour leader gave us a full blown run down on the whole shebang and we came away knowing more about Guam than we do about Melbourne.

Just on dark we boarded yet another plane and headed off to the Rock Island paradise. By the time we arrived at Palau International Airport it was pushing 10,00pm Friday nite and it was beginning to feel like a holiday. After 3 International Airports in 20 hours I had become an expert in filling out forms, maybe when I return I will learn how to fill out the correct forms at work and not upset the Financial controller. Our ever smiling dive tour leader, Marcel, met us at the airport and demanded we fill out more forms or suffer the consequences ( that is - no form equals NO lunch tomorrow) We all opted for the sandwiches because none of us had a clue what a Bento Box was!

At 7.00 am we started having Breakfast at the Red Rooster Café. Once again cooked doesn't always mean cooked and several of the crew were less than impressed by the local tradition of runny eggs. Finally the bus arrived and a new Palau tradition was created- A person called Turner must always hold up the bus by being last on board. The first day we were bundled onto a banana boat and after the assembling the gear and checking/ guessing weights we were off. Zooming across the still clear waters we headed for the German Channel and our first dive. We spent an enjoyable and relaxing 55mins at about 21metres and although the Manta's were noticeably absent the dive served its purpose and we all felt pretty damn good after it. The 2 snor-

kelling non diving wives Carol Briggs and Robyn Peach had a ball over in the shallows.

Lunch was then produced and our introduction to Palau's 3 tiered toasted sandwiches began. After lunch Marcel gave us a brief on using the infamous Palau Reef Hook, It involved sticking a small Stainless steel hook into the reef and after inflating your BC slightly and then ( read this part with a Dutch accent and a look of wide eyed panic) "...you Hold on for your lives...." You

then stay motionless in the raging current and let the sharks and fish parade in front of you. After this engaging speech we started to gear up to dive the Big Drop Off.

This was a very nice dive. Quite a few sharks to be seen and the current was minor, which made a bit of a mockery of our practice run to try the reef hooks. The fish life and general reef made this most enjoyable and the camera crews went into overdrive. Andy, Gail and Pat snapping everything that moved and Jim Turner filming the various VSAGers crashing into each other as we came to grips with diving a drop off in formation. John Peach and I came to grips at one stage but I think I scared him off with a threat of violence and I never saw him again.

A tremendous storm was brewing as the dive finished and we returned to the marina in torrential rain looking like drowned rats. We trudged forlornly down the ramp to the dive shop only to find a large warm crystal clear pool awaiting us. Fully dressed we fell in with gay abandon and splashed about like 3 year olds until someone noticed the bar next to the pool and we rushed over to satiate our thirst. We were now, truly, in heaven. One of our members struck up an animated conversation with a local person who resembled a cross between a refrigerator and rugby union player. Unbeknown to me at the time she was going to be the best looking local I saw on the whole trip. The following day we had 2 new members to our crew as Skye and Laura Turner decided to try snorkeling the reefs rather than land exploration. With the addition of an American called Larry (sometimes known as Hank, Todd or even Homer) we were given a bigger boat. Powerful, noisy but fast and comfortable, we were soon at the dive site.

Dexters Wall was a very good dive and it was here that the legend of Briggs vs Richards was born. Both men claim that that the other was always crashing into him and as

the others were too busy crashing into each other, no independent witness ever came forward to offer an independent opinion of the ongoing dispute. To break up the disputes large quantities of sharks and pelagic fish of various sizes floated majestically through the wall of bubbles and did their best to entertain the divers. Larry just floated enigmatically around reading his fish ID book as though he were born there.



Lunch was again the massive local sandwiches and a drink plus a snorkel for most. The diving was so pleasant I blew the rest of my tank under the boat in 10m just watching the passing parade.

Marcel proceeded to brief us on the legendary Blue Corner. We would descend to the reef edge and swim to the left until he gave the signal to "hook in an Hold on for your lives.." As the dive began the fish life and sharks were excellent. Surely we all thought it can't really be any better at the hook in spot? He gave the signal and we all hooked in. As we turned into the current and looked out into the blue an amazing sight had us all spellbound. It was like an Imax cinema screen with wall to wall sharks and fish. They just paraded in front of us like a Spielberg computer generated movie scene. I don't know if we stayed there for 2 minutes or 20 minutes, it was just awesome. When he signaled to unhook and move on I wanted to kill him- it was just that good. As we drifted across the plateau behind the corner we encountered schools of barracuda and giant trevally all whilst being attacked by angry triggerfish.



On return to my room before dinner my roommate Jumping Jim Turner slumped on the bed with his obligatory scotch and coke and murmured contentedly "that was simply the best dive I have ever done." He then asked me about finding a claw hammer to use to fix his recalcitrant movie camera. I poured him another scotch instead.

Having tired of eating at the Red Rooster we all retired to the local Thai joint and stayed remarkably sober. A few of us be-

gan experimenting with the local shop across from the motel which cooked a nightly BBQ in the street and sold cold cheap beer. The whole shop was only as big as my kitchen. The master of ceremonies was an interesting man called Leo and he had a memory like a steel trap for our names. I thought this establishment was pretty low key and small time until later on when I ventured into the metropolis of Koror, I realized that this was about average for here.

The diving from here was mainly Blue corner, blue Holes, WW2 shipwrecks , more Blue Corner, some insane channel run, Chandelier Cave, Negerchong outside, and the ubiquitous Blue Corner. I think none of us would have complained if we only dived it again for the rest of our lives.

It was about this time that AJ Storen showed us he had real guts by ordering a Bento Box for lunch. We all craned our necks to get a better look as the mysterious black plastic box was handed to him. Voila!! A veritable feast of chicken ( or pork or whatever) veggies , rice and seaweed rolls. The following day most of the boat had a Bento Box and the local bakery almost went out of business.

The World War2 wrecks were very interesting. Only Pat, Alan, AJ Storen and myself dived the first one. Jackie Storen had threatened to do it but after 2 sensational dives she opted to sit at the bar and get tanked with Emily. The Helmut



wreck is only a short 5 minute ride from the jetty- its actually in the harbour itself. Its starts quite shallow at 14 meters and although not a clear water dive we all found it pretty amazing. It still has live depth charges on it and quite a bit of other japa- nese ordinance.

The other wreck we dived was the Chuyo.Maru. (see [www.samstours/divesites](http://www.samstours/divesites) ). A very interesting dive and re- laxing as Marcel allowed us to wander aimlessly around it and explore it at our

leisure. The wreck is 285ft long and very intact. It sank on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1944 after being bombed 3 times. I found the overhead structures and the stern gun particularly fasci- nating.

At different times we had masses of schooling fish breaking the surface as we zapped along to the dive sites and on one special occasion we had a large school of spinner dolphins performing amazing acrobatics for us as we cruised by.

The last days diving saw us say a sad good bye to Blue Corner and then after Laura did a quick intro dive with the ever smiling Marcel we all ventured into the Neger- chong drop-off and drift. As it was our final dive together a bit of clowning around took place and Emily and Jackie posed for pictures and Marcel got his comeuppance with 2 cu ft of compressed air up his clacker. We headed back to the bar for one last right royal piss up.

The general night life was low key to say the least. The Japanese Restaurant nite was enjoyed by only one person, and only because he ordered from the opposition joint across the road! The nite club at the end of the point we stayed at, was populated by drunks incapable of coherent conversation. We gave the pool hall a good workout and AJ Storen won the heart of one local staggering drunken lady. Sadly for her he declined her advances and his reputation was not sullied.

The motel offered massages for \$25US and the only person to my knowledge who owned up to having one was Jackie. She was so impressed she had 2. I was keen but



Pat warned me about the "happy ending" and after seeing the locals I was a tad keen to preserve what little dignity I had left after losing at pool to just about everyone.

Palua is not a place to go to if you are look- ing for shopping, nightlife or well made streets. The safety standards in the buildings was abominable, loose electrical wiring hanging mindlessly across the back of sev- eral buildings and numerous examples of 10ft long clusters of reinforcing rods sticking up from buildings in the vain hope of a fu- ture expansion? Dogs, cats and chooks wan-

dered aimlessly everywhere. The dogs kept their distance except one who I befriended and I called him Darren. Darren didn't really like me as such, I think he was just amused that I didn't want to eat him.



The food was extremely good at the Indian place and also we had a slap up feast at the Palau Pacific Resort which is where most of us would prefer to stay if ever we return. Some place called Kraemers was favoured by the Americans and other expats so we all ate their one nite for the much vaunted spaghetti nite. I had some weird tooth cracking black bean concoction and the 2 steaks I saw bordered on inedible. Talking to an expat at the bar he told me that there wasn't a dentist within 2000 miles who could do an extraction

without a chisel- so I didn't complain of a toothache after that.

One of the highlights was the Pats Palau dance. Nobody has any idea what its about or why he does it, but it sure is entertaining. He says its something to do with the local custom of respecting the older members of their society. I tried it out when I got home and my wife booked me in for therapy.

Finally, after a day of sight seeing in 2 separate groups we stayed up until 2.15 am playing pool and drinking until our flight back to Guam. We arrived at the motel around 6.00 am and most went straight to bed. Our trip to the rock island paradise was over.

For the exciting adventures of diving in Guam see Alan Storens Feature Article.



## PALAU

### Carol Briggs (non-diver)

*As a non diver, I was very apprehensive about going to Palau and suggested to Peter that he travel there on his own. He didn't like that idea much and said that he would not go without me. I was apprehensive as I felt I would be stuck in a strange place with people that I really didn't know that well, if at all and I also felt that I would probably be spending a lot of time alone as Peter would be out on the boat diving all day. How could I have been so WRONG!!*



*What a fantastic holiday!! I could not have wished for a better group of people to go away with. We all got on very well together and shared a lot of laughs also. Our day started early by meeting for breakfast at the Red Rooster Café. We were then picked up at 8.30am by our trusty driver Roger (what a godsend) and chauffeured to Neco Marine where our boat and Dive Master, Marcel (alias beetle nut) was waiting for us. We then set off for the dive spots travelling the beautiful calm, crystal clear, colourful waters of Palau.*

*After we reached the dive spots and all the divers were in the water, we non divers that were left Robyn, Skye, Laura and I snorkelled the beautiful warm waters of Palau. We snorkelled on all the days that the rest were diving and the fish life and coral was simply magic, not to mention the water temperature which was 29 degrees most days. We also spotted a few reef sharks, which was a bit unnerving. We were told that they are harmless after hoping out of the water very quickly; the first time we spotted one swimming very close by. We felt very brave after that and at one time swam with about four sharks (I hope they were reef sharks!!) I think one of the highlights for me was the first time we spotted wild dolphins. The Captain of the boat spotted them and drove the boat around in circles and there were dolphins as far as the eye could see, hundreds and hundreds, enjoying playing in the wake of the boat and showing off to us.*



*We all shared lunch together on the boat every day, AJ (Storen) being the first brave one to try the "Bento Box" (a mixture of assorted goodies put together in a plastic box). Many were brave and followed his lead and chose the Bento Box also. I decided to stick to a cheese and salad sandwich, sounds pretty boring although really quite tasty. I had an early run in with*

*the Palau toilets and decided that it was better to be safe than sorry (I had to mention the toilets for Gail and Robyn!!) they were quite strange really, (not Gail and Robyn) the toilets!! It was like watching the world go around, if you know what I mean (quite gross!!). So nice to get home to that part of it, I felt like kissing mine (not quite though, close!!).*

*After the afternoon dive and another snorkel we would set off back to Neco Marine where we enjoyed a late afternoon drink and snack at the Drop Off Bar. Trusty Roger was always there waiting for us and would drive us back to our motel, only to pick us up a couple of hours later after showers all round and a change into some good gear to go out for dinner most nights. A girl could get used to that sort of lifestyle very quickly!!*

*In the beginning I was apprehensive, at the end I was sad for the holiday to end, as I enjoyed every moment (except the toilet moment). The waters of Palau were beautiful, the group of people we went with were simply fantastic and great to be around and I would not have the slightest hesitation to go on another diving holiday as a non diver.*

## **Diving in Guam Sat 19th May 2007**

*After arriving in Guam early Saturday morning from Palau at 5.30 am, I rocked up to the dive shop for the 8.30 am shore dive. All boats were booked out but the friendly folk at MDA ( Micronesians Divers Association) put on free shore dives led by a local instructor as a guide. Tank and weights for \$8.00 US make this a cheap day out, and I only had one day to dive before flying back to Cairns, so it was now or never.*

*After falling in love with the resident cat- Gilbert, I signed the register and waited for the others to appear. After consulting the tide charts Lee, the guide, decided that the spot he wanted to show me would be to tidally effected so he switched to plan B. The 3 of us then headed off to a local cemetery where Lee told me to leave the car unlocked as " it stops the bastards from breaking the windows to steal anything " Comforting words indeed. I presumed he meant the living, not the dead people. Lee, Andy and myself waded in and swam across the shallows until the depth reached about 30 ft and then dropped down onto the coral below.*

*I have to say this was very interesting diving. Fantastic coral and reef formations, fair fish life, although some of the coral appears to be dead and covered in a fine layer of silt. Enough of the reef was alive to make it a good dive and half way through the dive we encountered the Amtrak (an amphibious vehicle transporter with traction wheels) This small but well preserved WW2 wreck was a highlight for me and if the other 2 had-n't been hell bent on finding a rumoured drop off, I would have happily explored around the wreckage for another 15 minutes. Visibility improved as we swam seaward and probably reached 50-60ft.*

*The 3 of us had lunch at the nearby Seamans Club. Possibly the best Cheese Burger of*



my whole trip, but as I had decided to do a 2nd dive with them the Bourbon and coke was put on the back burner. Both men were from Minnesota and after hearing their stories of Minnesota Winters -30F, I decided Melbourne isn't so bad after all. No wonder they chose to spend a few years in Guam.

After reconnoitering back at the dive shop I forked out a massive \$3.00 US for a fill and met our new buddy Dean who looked remarkably like the actor Ed Harris. Dean had toured through Australia and felt that Boags Beer was the best he had ever tasted. We bonded instantly at this point. The cat of course said nothing.

The 2nd dive was at Nimitz Beach. I'm reliably informed that every 2nd thing in Guam is named after the ubiquitous Admiral Nimitz as well a class of naval vessels. Gearing up on grass with the cars unlocked (wallets back at the shop for safe keeping) was a breeze and then it was a short 10 metre walk to the waters edge. This dive had more interesting coral formations than the cemetery, but possibly due to its location next to a ramp there was more dead coral than live, but fantastic swim thru's and canyons. Some of the sea slugs were massive and nudibranchs were not hard to find. I really enjoyed it although the viz was not much over 20 ft.

After dropping off the hire gear and picking up my Dive card from the shop Dean graciously gave me a lift back to my motel. I have to say after meeting these 3 guys and the MDA staff, that if anybody is passing through Guam, go diving with MDA- they sure look after you.

Don't fall in love with Gilbert the cat as he's mine!

Shadow

I just wanted you to know I have entered the snapdragon part of my life.



Part of me has snapped...  
And the rest of me is draggin'!

## Diving Guam Part 2

### Alan Storen

*After Palau Pat Reynolds, AJ and Jackie Storen and myself had a few days to relax in Guam and we had no fixed agenda. Pat was to try and arrange the Police ride-along and there are always the shops but I have dived at Guam before and was keen to check out a couple of the sites that I had not dived. Greg had done a couple of shore dive but I was interested in showing AJ and Jackie the twin wrecks, one WWI and one WWII, touching in the harbour and also the famous Blue Hole.*

*I booked with MDA divers and the all up cost for the three of us, including tanks, weights, boat trip and airfills was a grand total of \$61 US ( about \$75Aussi). At \$25 per head I was not sure what to expect. Would we have to row to the site?? No so, a very well fitted out boat that took 20 divers out to the dives and we were not crowded - in or out of the water! Also included a lift from the shop to the boat harbour.*

*The harbour was not clean due to recent rain so we ventured outside the heads and dropped into 'Blue Hole'. The terrain was almost a flat ledge that ran out from the shore at about 20m depth, for about*

*50-100m, and just on the edge of this ledge, before it plummeted to mega depth was a shaft about 10m by 5m that went down to 40m and came out horizontally to the wall. AJ, Jackie and I dropped down the shaft (the Blue Hole) and out at near 40m only to look up at the dive boat on the surface. We could clearly read the sign painted on the bottom of the boat that said 'Sun Chaser'. Did I mention the great viz? That marine life was not as good as Palau, we were spoilt, but it was still very good and the wall*



*especially was covered in hard and soft corals, many fish and several different types of seastars and nudibranches. The ledge had patchy reef but each patch had something different and well worth the dive. Several morays were sighted.*

*The next site was 'Barracuda Rock', a mushroom shaped rock with resident whitetips, many swimthroughs and of course barracudas, not to mention several morays, good reef and mega other fish. We continued on to another site called 'The Crevice' which was similar to the Blue Hole except that it had broken all the way to the wall and was larger. A 'V' shaped feature that was reasonably large and a resident moray that took a liking to AJ's fins. Many fish also seemed to call this place home and again very good reef but patchy.*

*The others on the boat were 2 Americans from the Air Force base at Guam, who*

*came to Cairns on the same flight as us and were going to do a live aboard on the GBR and also 10 Japanese tourists in two groups, each with their own divemaster/guides. We could see them under the water all gathered around their guide reading what he wrote on his slate and holding themselves off the reef with a 30cm long plastic stick. I think it served as a pointer and prodder as well! Pity about their fins bashing the reef! One group of Japanese were older than the normal age of many tourist divers, all women aged, I would guess, between 50 and 70!  
If you venture to Guam to do a bit of diving I would strongly recommend MDA divers as they were very well organised, great boat, efficient and the price is right!*

### **Mike Letch Update**

Mike Letch is an inspirational person who gave a brilliant and touching presentation to VSAG in March.

Mike is a pioneering diving instructor, who was left a paraplegic after a tragic motorcycle racing crash in 1970.

"Scuba Diving is always seen as an elite recreational sport, but for people with a disability it is one of the few things that can liberate you," Mike says.

Good news for Mike is that he was presented with a Rotary Shine On Award by the Rotary Club of Brighton North.

Rotary Club of Brighton North vocational committee Chairwoman Lyn Mortimer said the club decided to highlight Mike Letch's work after listening to his "inspirational" story.

This is great recognition of an outstanding person.  
Congratulations Mike from VSAG

JL

## BALI SAFARI

*Like most people I am not lucky with raffles and competitions, but after we returned from our Fiji trip, Mary started whining she had itchy fins and wanted to travel more just as I opened the page in Dive Log, which had the Bali comp. What the hell, I sent in an entry, and duly forgot about it. A couple of months later, Dave Bryant rang to congratulate me on winning the comp, and was so excited he promised to come with us. We were just preparing for our Tonga trip, and couldn't fit it in between the Cup weekend at the Prom, and my Truk trip in December, so we put it off til this year. Yeah, it is a tough life!*

*Mary was initially not keen to go, with terrorists and such, but as she researched the possible dives, she warmed to the trip. We had never considered Bali as a dive destination, but with some good reports of muck dives and mantas, the excitement built. Dave was good to his promise, and booked with us, although at slightly different accommodations. Our prize included 3 days diving with accommodation at 3 resorts. We had to book our own flights, but Jetstar had a sale and it was all falling in place. The final booking had us doing 16 dives in the week!*

*Aquamarine Diving met us at Denpasar and ferried to our resort, the Watergarden Hotel in Candidasa at around 1.00 a.m. After a delish brekky, the Aquamarine Minibus whisked us away to our first location at Talumben. We relaxed in a beachfront restaurant while the crew carried in our gear and set it up, then were amazed as some Balinese women hoisted our kits onto their heads and took them down the beach to our entry point! Not an easy task on the slippery pebble beach!*

*Our first dive was the Liberty Wreck, a US freighter torpedoed in WW11, and sitting on a sloping bottom close to shore. Now Mary and Dave are rabid still photographers, and kept stopping on the black sand, finding tiny squishy things! Finally, at the wreck we were greeted by a huge barracuda, just hanging in midwater off the bow. Clouds of trevally swirled around the superstructure, and reef fish darted in and out of the wreck, hardly noticed by Mary who was transfixed by a pygmy sea-horse on a gorgonian! For many different reasons, what a dive!*



*We were undressed on the beach and our gear and cameras taken back to the restaurant by porters, where lunch was waiting. Now this is diving! A short snooze after lunch and we again entered the water right in front of our table for a muck dive at Coral Gardens. You think still photographers are a gentle bunch until you see them facing off*

over a blue ribbon eel, funny thing is there were lots of 'em! There were a few leaf scorpion fish around as well as nudis and other squishies. I came across a model plane about 5 metres long which was swarming with glassies and had a huge sweetlip underneath. Another top dive.

After another snooze and film change, the sun had dropped behind the volcano, Mt Agung, and it was time to night dive the Liberty wreck. The current was up, but our guide Katuk had a plan to drift onto the wreck and return through an eddy. The current restricted us throughout the dive, and I didn't see the promised flashlight fish, but the half dozen large bump headed parrots made up for it. The highlight was filming a medium sized estuary cod as it grabbed a large surgeon fish.

The Watergarden Hotel is stunning, with the units set among terraced koi ponds and lush tropical plants. A remaining memory is filling in my log on the deck with the sounds of trickling water, and large koi begging for food at my feet. The meals were excellent, and well priced, and none of us succumbed to Bali Belly.

A 35 minute boat ride the next morning found us at the island of Nusa Penida, where we experienced clear water and sloping coral reefs. We dived "Ped" and "SD", having our first taste of cold water upwellings, and the visual disturbance from the mixing. All the usual tropical species were well represented, and Mary found a huge Triton snail. I was surprised to see a large school of drummer, but given the water temperature, it made sense.

Next day again saw us aboard Aquamarine's excellent 10 metre boat, heading for Gili Mimpang. The boat is modern, roomy, fast and comfortable, but has a ladder hung over the side for entry. Balinese are Hindus, and make religious offerings of flowers and fruit everywhere, including boat trips. Gili Mimpang was an unexciting sloping bottom interspersed with coral bommies. The last bommie was exceptional, covered in glassies, and having a swim though packed with angels and surgeons.



Blue Lagoon was next on the agenda, and we approached from the adjacent bay called Turtle Neck. The sloping bottom did nothing to protect us from the 1/2 knot current, and the hand assisted swim revealed hundreds of tiny yellow sea cucumbers massing, and a couple of scorpion fish. Across the coral rubble of Blue Lagoon we encountered less current, and some coral bommies, one also swarming with glassies. Our guide, Mitra, pointed out leaf scorpionfish, one white, one pink, and one brown. As I filmed a lionfish stalking the glassies, Mitra pointed out a frog fish, although I just saw encrusting sponge until I made out an eye!

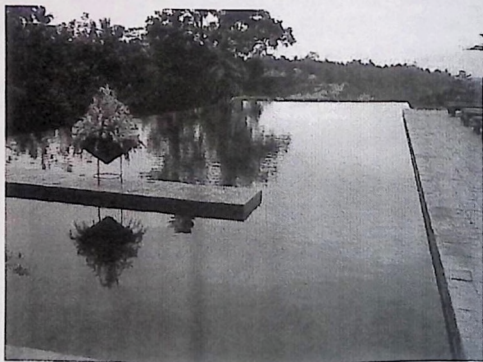
The boat held 20 plus knots through the 1.5 metre



swells on the way to Nusa Penida the next day. Our quest today was Manta Point. The swell rolled over the cleaning station bommie, dirtying up the water, but there were no shortage of mantas. We counted up to 17 big rays gliding in and out of the gloom, and after a while, they came within touching distance. It was hard shooting with sun rays and turbidity, but an awesome encounter. We made two dives here.

Our third dive for the day was a revelation. Bat Cave is similar to the sea caves in Tonga where you swim in through a submerged entrance and surface inside, but this one has hundreds of bats in it. We left the cave to swim to Mola Mola point, but there were no sunfish today. What did amaze us was the colour and health of the sloping coral reefs. Throw in lots of tropical fish and we witnessed a real kaleidoscope.

That night we stayed at the luxurious Alila Manggis resort, and enjoyed a "romantic dinner" as part of our prize. A couple of errant strobes were all that reminded us this wasn't a dream. I was getting used to the crew lifting my gear on and off, carrying everything to and from, washing and setting up my kit, picking us up and returning us to the resort. If I just had someone to charge batteries and tapes, I too could laze away at the pool. Such are the burdens of underwater videography!



Muck was the order of the next day, and those macro heads, Mary and Dave were excited! Back on the minibus, and past the towering volcano, Mt Agung to Talumben. Again we sipped cool drinks at the restaurant while the crew set up our gear and carried it to the entry point to be lifted onto our backs. It all seemed too easy, but we had a 1 metre swell rolling up the pebble beach, and the water along the shore was soup! Amazingly, as we dropped a metre or two down, the water cleared up to reveal the Coral Gardens again! I casually swam over the blue ribbon eels, not even a second glance at the leaf scorpions, but stopped in my tracks when I saw Mary barely a foot away from a giant barracuda being cleaned. With her macro set

*up she was shooting details of its tonsils, as its 10 centimetre teeth were menacingly close to her port, and still it hung motionless as the cleaner wrasse did it's job.*

*Seraya was the next site, and we hired an outrigger canoe powered by a lawnmower engine to get there. Although similar to Coral Gardens, Seraya has less features, but produced a stunning harlequin shrimp, ghost pipefish, stone fish, and a shrimp on a colourful nudibranch. There were plenty of the animals we had come to expect as well, and the black volcanic sand seemed to magnify their colours.*



*Not being mucked up enough, we returned to the Coral Gardens with a belly full of nasi goreng, and continued exposing film and filling memory sticks. I went back to the model plane and spent some time with the huge blubberlip sweetlip. Mary's bag of exposed film was bulging in proportion with her smile. Those initial reservations about this trip had been buried in black sand!*

*Last day of diving, and we finished with a trip to Gili Biaha to film white tips in the shark cave, although there were only two sharks. Schooling fish flashed in the video lights in the cave, and quite a few fish milled around near the entrance, but we could not make headway into the current. Still the vis was good so we potted around near the cave protected from the stream.*



*We motored back to Padangbai harbour and dived a sandy slope and coral bommies in filthy water with plastic bags and bottles floating by. Despite this, there were plenty of fish, but the conditions were not good for photography. Our last dive was back at Blue Lagoon, also in the Padangbai bay. This time we went straight to the bommie with the glassies, leaf scorpions, and frog-fish, and blew off the remaining film.*

*Three very satisfied underwater image makers packed away their cameras and lights that evening at our new location in Ubud. We had the luxury theme continued at Alila Ubud, and our room had its shower in a small private courtyard! Dave had booked at the Cerayha Dewata nearby, and we joined him for the evening meals in a*

restaurant for 500 people, which served excellent meals to less than a dozen patrons each night we were there. The manager told us it had been this way since the bombings.

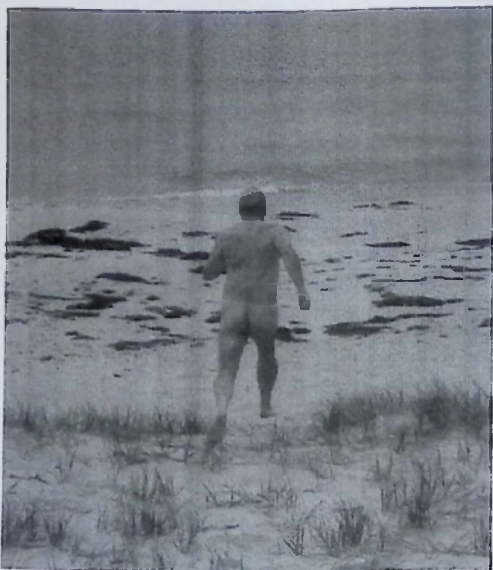
Ubud is set in the mountains, with a strong art and craft flavour, and cooler evenings than the coast. We did some shopping in the local shops and markets, and Mary showed a definite talent for bargaining. Our highlight was the monkey forest, where hundreds of monkeys play and attempt to get food from tourists. Its comical watching tourists who foolishly bring snacks in with them being climbed on and ripped off by the monkeys! We found the monkeys to be gentle and caring as we didn't have any food.

Our trip home went like clockwork, so I have officially shaken the tag of travel jinx! Bali was a fantastic dive holiday destination, especially for photographers. We have to thank Sportdiving/Divelog, Aquamarine, Watergarden Hotel, Alila Manggis, and Alila Ubud for the awesome trip, and highly recommend Aquamarine Diving Bali for their thoroughly professional operation.

## **VSAG LIFE MEMBER HITS THE SOUTHERN OCEAN IN STYLE**

**The attached photo came to our notice recently of member John Goulding hitting the surf at the very picturesque Wineglass Bay in Tasmania one cold day back in April .....And how do we know that it was cold?????**

**.....well, we refused to publish the frontal shot of John.....to protect his manly image, (photo courtesy of Amazing Wildlife Wonders)**





was indeed the Australian submarine. The conning tower hatch by which the crew made their escape was still ajar. It is hoped that in the expedition in September 2007, this hatch can be opened wider and a ROV will be able to enter the hull of the AE2.



*AE2's bow draped in fishing nets. Courtesy of Dr Mark Spencer.*

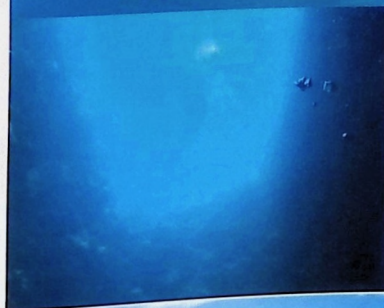
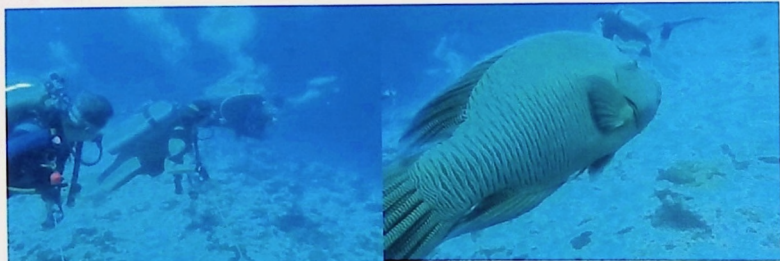
The full story of her discovery in 1998 can be found online at [http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/heritagensw/dec98/10\\_art.htm](http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/heritagensw/dec98/10_art.htm).

### **2007 Project AE2**

The Submarine Institute of Australia (SIA), see <http://www.submarineinstitute.com/?doc=41>, has received government funding, to be matched by private sponsors, to mount an expedition in September 2007.

The SIA aims to ensure the protection, preservation and promotion of AE2, to contribute to an informed debate on her future and ensure that AE2's contribution to the Gallipoli campaign is duly recognised by telling the story of her brave crew.

The SIA, supported by the Defence Science and Technology Organisation and spon-



Palau 2007