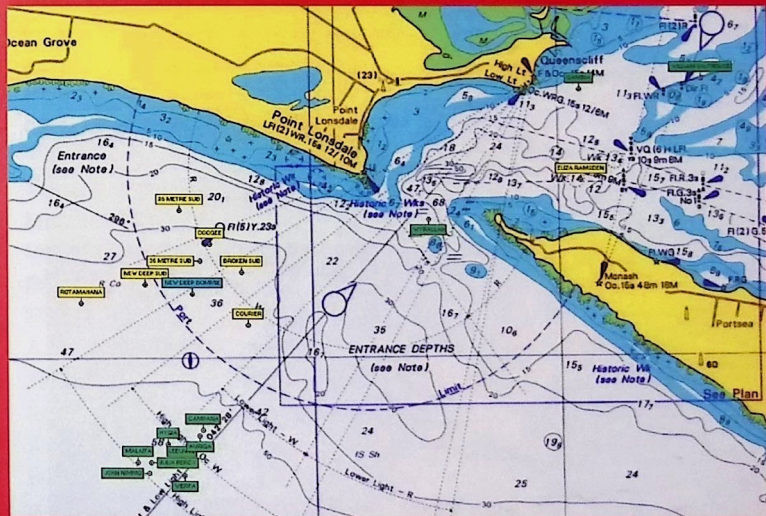


FATHOMS

OCTOBER NOVEMBER 2007

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP



www.vsag.org.au

Postal Address: VSAG
224 Wattle Valley Road
Camberwell VIC 3124

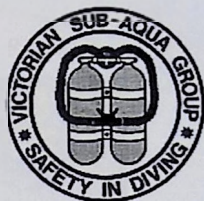




2006 Life Members Dinner
Life members plus current President



FATHOMS



Official Journal of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group

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VSAG General Meetings
3rd Thursday in the month

Editorial Submissions to:

Bell's Hotel
157 Moray Street (cnr Coventry Street)
South Melbourne, 8.00 pm
Alan Storen
15 Regal Court Vermont South Vic 3133
storens@bigpond.net.au



Editorial

Another year has come and gone in the life of VSAG with a well attended AGM in September. The financial report has been included with this edition for all financial members.

The next activity on the calendar is the weekend away at the Prom on the Melbourne Cup weekend.

JL has arranged the Christmas function at Beaumaris Yacht Squadron Club and details are included on page 18. Make sure you put this event in your diary, it is on a Sunday afternoon, and bring the family. Should be a great day—rain, hail or shine. There is an early bird prize so book your tickets before the end of the month to be included

Andy has been away on a well deserved break and I hope to include some of his travel stories in the next edition.

The Christmas trip to Portland has been booked but it is not too late to book in if you contact me before the end of the month. We have a good number of starters and it should be a fun time away with the group.

Make sure you come along to the November meeting as we have booked a great speaker and the evening should be very informative and entertaining. Guests invited.

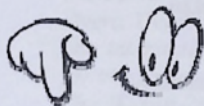
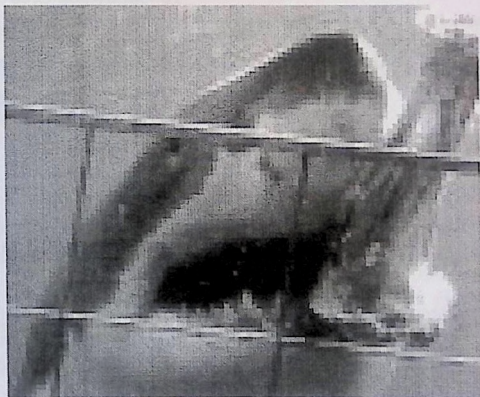
Not a lot of diving has been happening with poor weather the main problem but it looks like it is picking up so get the gear serviced and jump back into the water soon.

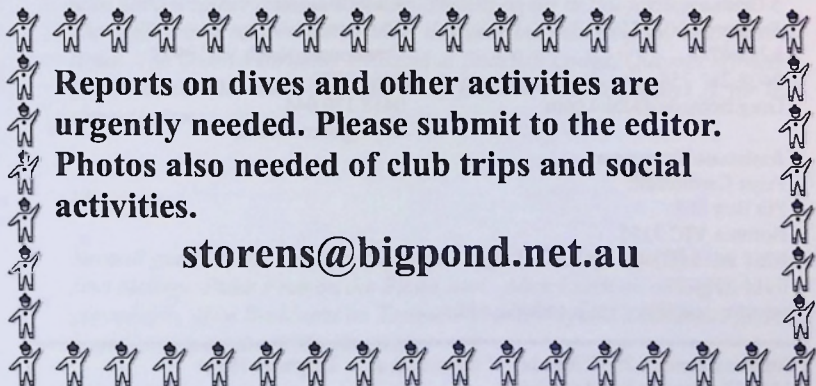
Just for the record the Literary award was won by Greg Richards and as editor I concur with the decision of Paul Tipping who was the judge this year. The Club member of the year was Alan Storen.

As always I am looking for articles, old photos and any other contribution to Fathoms to make it an interesting read. Please send and contributions to me at storens@bigpond.net.au

Got new scuba gear for my wife, sure was a good trade!
[not really but I liked the quote]

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.
storens@bigpond.net.au

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

Presidents Annual Report 2006/2007

Alan Storen

We have achieved many of the things we set out to do this year and we have a good base for the future. Thank you especially to the committee for their support and for their work during the past year.

Financial Matters

As will be reported by the treasurer we had a positive result for the year with a balance at the end of the financial year of \$11,189. This is still subject to audit.

Thank you to Don Abel for auditing the books.

Diving

We conducted many local dives during the year with some night dives and Saturday dives included. Some cancellations due to weather but this is to be expected.

The Palau trip was great with many participants – both divers and non-divers. Thanks to Pat Reynolds for his organisation.

Our interstate trip at xmas to Eden was a great success. Thank to Pat again for his organisation.

Our Wilson Prom trips at Easter and November Cup weekend were blessed with good weather and good diving. Thanks again to Pat for his work.

The Jaffa trip produced fewer crays this year but the company was good as usual. The Queens Birthday weekend at Boarfish Lodge, Queenscliff was great, thanks Alan Beckhurst and Mary for their hospitality and JL for his organisation.

Meetings

Several guests spoke at our regular meetings including Jan Watson on marine biology, Peter Fear on the Bikini Atol, Mick Letch on diving as a paraplegic, Alan Beckhurst on Tonga, Fiji and Whyalla and Stuart and Helena Cannon on the AE2 submarine.

Social

We had a number of social events during the year, some combined with diving. The November Cup weekend is becoming more popular, the Christmas function at our home was very well attended and a great afternoon, the xmas trip to Eden was great, the Easter at the Prom was very successful with many able to attend, the Queens Birthday weekend at Boarfish Lodge, Queenscliff was a sell out event and we also had Zoo Highlights and Christmas in July functions. It would appear that a 'paintball' day is soon to be on the calendar by popular demand.

New members

We had many new members join this year and several more in the pipeline. We will be having a 'New Member' night to see if we are meeting their needs. The guest list was 17 but not all are able to attend. Please encourage new members so that the club will grow – how does the saying go? -as we that are left grow old!

Welcome to those members and we hope you have a great time with us.

Committee

New members on the committee this year were Mike Kakafidis, Greg Richards and Lloyd Borrett. Greg and Lloyd only for the last couple of months to replace Trevor Williams, who moved to the ACT. and John Mills. I thank all members on the committee for the contributions that they have made this year. I especially would like to thank John Lawler for the significant contribution he has made in keeping us all in touch with what is going on via email and the significant help he has been in the functioning of the committee.

Leaving the committee this year are Darren Pearce, Leo Maybus and Gabriel Sekias and I thank them for their contribution over several years.

New members on the committee for the coming year are elected without the need for a ballot. They are Peter Briggs, Bridey Leggatt, Greg Richards and Lloyd Borrett.

Lloyd has written a review of procedures and practices of VSAG and one of the urgent issues that will need to be addressed by the new committee will be Lloyd's paper. I look forward to the challenge. The restructure which was raised last AGM has been delayed and is also an urgent task of the new committee.

Equipment

The compressor is not used much and we are currently having it assessed for repair. The oxygen cylinders/masks on the boats are also being assessed for upgrade.

Boats

We have mainly relied on Mick Jeacle, John Lawler and Peter Briggs's boats for most of the weekend diving with assistance from Andy Mastrowicz on club trips. I thank them for the use of their boats during the past year.

Fathoms

Some great articles this year and 'keep them coming'. I am always on the lookout for articles and can always find space for diving related stories.

SDFV

John and I were the VSAG representative on SDFV this year and many important issues were raised. Many related to abalone quotas / days and crays. The very successful Sunken Assets seminar was part organised by SDFV.

Web Site

Lloyd Borrett must be congratulated for the excellent work he has done on the web site and has launched us well and truly into the 21st century. I thank Lloyd on behalf of the club. I hope you have all 'signed up'.

Awards

*Literary Award: This year it was awarded to Greg Richards
Clubmember of the year: This year the recipient was Alan Storen*

I again thank you and the committee for your support this year.

Alan

DIVING IN ITALY.

Meg Johnson

Hi fellow VSAGers, remember me?. I know I haven't been diving with VSAG for ages, but I'm still around and still diving... I went to France & Italy for a month in August – had a fab time. Wasn't expecting to do any diving (although I did have my "C" card in my wallet, just in case). I'd read on the internet that it's the law in France & Italy that you can't dive with a commercial operator without a current dive medical (less than 12 months old), and I didn't have one. But....that didn't turn out to be the case, in Italy at least.

We spent about 5 days in the Cinque Terra area, in north west Italy. The Cinque Terra is a coastal area of 5 villages along about a 10-12 km stretch of coast. Beautiful coastline, and we did the walk along the coastal track linking the towns. Just spectacular views, and beats any "step class" known to man (or woman). Steep climbs and lots and lots and lots of steps.

The coast along the Cinque Terra is all marine park. We enquired at the dive shop at Riomaggiore about going for a dive, and were somewhat astounded at their lack of interest in our dive history or experience. A "C" card and 60 euros and you're in, no questions asked!

So, we went for a dive on 16 August in the Cinque Terra Marine Park off Riomaggiore. It was in "zone A" of the Marine Park – the area of supposedly most precious marine environment. The weather was wonderful and the water was very blue, but viz and water temperature were similar to an OK day in Melbourne in summer – about 18-20 degrees, and viz varying between about 12-20m. We went to about 29m and were under for about 45 minutes.

For the most part the landscape was disappointingly drab. Underneath ledges and overhangs there was some colour, some corals and zoanths, but nowhere near as beautiful and colourful and teeming with life as our own Port Phillip Bay. We saw a few fish, a couple of moray eels and an octopus. And we saw the white gorgonians that they told me were unique to the Cinque Terra. They gave me & my dive buddy our own pre-dive briefing in halting English, after



we'd listened intently, but understood almost nothing of the dive briefing in Italian – made me wonder how the Portsea dive shops would cope with a couple of Italian speaking divers rocking up there – I'd bet most dive guides in Melbourne wouldn't have a word of Italian, let alone enough for a reasonable dive briefing. The dive guide kept apologising for his English, but really he was fabulous.

The thing that made this dive worthwhile and memorable was the lobsters. The dive master took us down to an area in about 28-30m that was like the lobster equivalent of European high-density apartment living. In this one small area there a lobster every metre or so in every direction. There must have been 40 or 50 of them that we saw. The wall was just a mass of little lobster homes, and the lobsters were huge. Every metre or so a big, fat lobster was just sitting on his (or her) front porch watching the world go by. They were so tame you could actually pat them before they slowly backed away into the recesses of their caves. Amazing. I thought – with their laid back attitude to life they'd never get that big and fat on the back beaches of the mornington peninsula!

So, it was an interesting experience and I'm glad I went for a dive in Italy – but it really makes you appreciate what we've got here in our own backyard. I got talking to a woman from Milan who was also on the dive that day, and wanted to practice her English. She said that she gets down to the Cinque Terra as often as she can because the diving is so fantastic compared to where she usually dives. She told me she normally dives in the Italian Lakes – Lake Como and Lake Maggiore, which she said were cold and dark and there was nothing much to see. The Cinque Terra was a marine paradise by comparison. After the dive, I tried to explain to her that Melbourne is a marine paradise compared to the Cinque Terra, but I don't think she believed me.

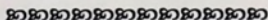
The other funny thing on the dive that day – was the girlfriend of one of my fellow divers. We geared up in the shop, it was a hot day, and then we waddled down the stairs (it seems, in Italy & France, there is ALWAYS stairs) to the harbour in full gear and sat on the rocks waiting for the dive guide to bring the zodiac around. Me and the girl from Milan were the only women on the dive (out of 7 divers and 1 dive guide). Well, one of the Italian boys on the dive had the most devoted (if somewhat pathetic) girlfriend I had ever seen. She carried his fins, mask, towel, water bottle etc. for him, and then while we sat on the rocks waiting for the zodiac she stood next to him, in her bikini, holding aloft a fin, to keep the sun off his face, and handing him his water bottle whenever he looked in need of a sip. I felt like saying "Hey Girlfriend, learn to dive yourself, and get a life" – but I don't speak Italian and she probably wouldn't have understood me even if I did.

Meg Johnson.



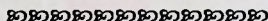
The Troubadour

Thoughts and experiences of a VSAG member and diver.



Troubadour is back after a short interlude. Those of you who have been to Canberra will know that scuba diving is not a major attraction, so diving has been off the agenda for most of this year - and Troubadour as well.

No scuba, no (real) footy – what's a bloke to do?



NSW and ACT have their Labour Day weekend in October, so off Cathy and I went to Girrandong between Woollongong and Jervis Bay: a fantastic location on Werri Beach close to the very beautiful coastal town of Kiama. (Kie-ama for northerners, Kee-ama for Mexicans) A short drive inland and we were bushwalking in rainforest at Minumurra National Park.

The Saturday was dive day. It turned out to be a warm, sunny but very windy day - and AFL Grand Final day. Not being a Geelong supporter I made the appropriate decision and went diving – a great call, that one.

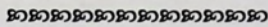
Shell Harbour Scuba Centre was the place to go. Good, safe shore diving to 20 meters at Bass Point, even on a windy day. After an excellent briefing a group of 8 experienced divers were led into the first gully by Mike Harris for a 40 minute dive. The terrain was interesting and varied though the colour range was a bit limited. Some very interesting fish species were present but distributed sparsely – rays, blue groper, cuttlefish, nudie-branches and a sea dragon amongst them.

In the afternoon the visibility for the second dive was crap, but that didn't matter. Six divers with Mike set off for 3rd gully on underwater scooters. In spirit James Bond types we may have been but in body, probably not. A good 50 minutes of scooting and we saw a lot of terrain and a lot more fish life, despite the

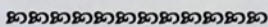




poor viz, because we covered a huge amount of territory. Mostly we 'sat' on the scooters rather than hold them, leaving hands free. Great fun.



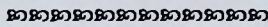
A plug for Shell Harbour Scuba Centre – these professionally led dives cost the grand sum of, you guessed it, zilch. The only costs were for equipment and fills etc., so a dive using your own gear will cost you..... zilch.



I have tried a couple of options for diving out of Canberra. There are a two dive shops and the Australian National University dive club. All are ok in their own way. The dive shops have 'club' dives, at a price of course. ANU scuba club is open to outsiders who qualify, but without some other connection to the university membership feels a bit sterile. Dive trips are usually for an entire weekend, because of the travel involved, a couple of times a month.



Strangely enough, it is quicker to drive from Canberra to Bateman's Bay to dive than it is to drive from Kensington to Sorrento!!



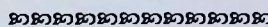
Had a great day with VSAG in early September. Jumped at the chance to dive on a Saturday when the Father's Day dive was moved. Not being able to fly for 24 hrs after diving generally rules out Sunday dives.



After noticing that many VSAG dives were cancelled due to weather during winter, Melbourne turned on a fantastic day to be out on the water. A couple of dives and a catch up with VSAG dive buddies was a great way to spend a day away from the pollies.



Thanks to everyone for catering for the Canberra interloper.





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Protection
at a very
Small Cost!

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- **Dive Injury (Treatment) Insurance...** *Optional*
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The Region's only dedicated dive health & safety magazine
- Enter your medical information in our **Emergency Medical Database**, receive **DAN Product Discounts** and access **Member-Only Offers with Bonus +**
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*Emergencies Happen ...
Are You Prepared?*

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Head Office - Australia • Ph: 61-3-9886 9166
Fax: 61-3-9886 9155 • Email: info@danasiapacific.org

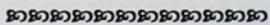




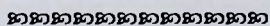
Talking about flying after diving reminds me of the special problem of diving out of Canberra. Having to climb between 600-800 metres up to the Southern Tablelands on the way home can cause decompression illness.



Consequently most dive days involve an early start, with two dives before lunch or early afternoon at the latest, followed by a 'surface interval' before driving home.



The plan now is to get in some diving each month – we'll see how we go. Certainly looking for Xmas at Portland with other VSAGers though.



I am keen to include items by other members, existing and new divers.



Send them to my new email address
Trevor.J.Williams@bigpond.com.



Wisdom:

WHEN I WAS MARRIED 25 YEARS, I TOOK A LOOK AT MY WIFE ONE DAY AND SAID, "HONEY, 25 YEARS AGO WE HAD A CHEAP APARTMENT, A CHEAP CAR, SLEPT ON A SOFA BED AND WATCHED A 10-INCH BLACK AND WHITE TV, BUT I GOT TO SLEEP EVERY NIGHT WITH A HOT 25-YEAR-OLD BLOND." NOW WE HAVE A \$500,000.00 HOME, A \$45,000.00 CAR, NICE BIG BED AND PLASMA SCREEN TV, BUT I'M SLEEPING WITH A 50-YEAR-OLD WOMAN. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOU ARE NOT HOLDING UP YOUR SIDE OF THINGS."

MY WIFE IS A VERY REASONABLE WOMAN. SHE TOLD ME TO GO OUT AND FIND A HOT 25-YEAR-OLD BLONDE, AND SHE WOULD MAKE SURE THAT I WOULD ONCE AGAIN BE LIVING IN A CHEAP APARTMENT, DRIVING A CHEAP CAR, SLEEPING ON A SOFA BED AND WATCHING A 10-INCH BLACK AND WHITE TV.

AREN'T OLDER WOMEN GREAT? THEY REALLY KNOW HOW TO SOLVE YOUR MID-LIFE CRISIS!

BARNOOLT ESTATE 1080 DIVE

REPORT

Friday 8th of June after finishing work at Rosebud I headed down to Sorrento and put my car on the ferry .. This was the start of my adventure for the long weekend... Taking the car across on ferry would save two and half hours of travel time. The ride on the ferry from Sorrento to Queensclif was fantastic. A pod off dolphins swam right up to the ferry and I was looking right at them they looked like they were having fun riding on the bow waves and were looking right at me as if to say why are you not in the water joining in on the fun?

The boat ride on the ferry only took half a hour. The drive from Queenscliff to Mt Gambier took around 6 hours I arrived at Mt Gambier at 730pm ... On the way to the Belum Pub I Had to drop in to Forestry South Australia to collect my diving permit for pines and mud holeI was the first diver of the group to arrive at the Belum Pub at 815pmThere was a live band playing at the time All the locals where down there having a good drinking session. The music the band was playing was blues music and John butler theme and was great to watch while sinking a couple of pots of beer and mingling in with the locals..

Two and a half-hours later the rest of the group of divers rocked up. The first night I hardly got any sleep as I was all pumped up about diving on Barnoolt Estate and could not wait to get into 1080 sink as this would be my first dive on this Site.. By 830am we finally arrived at the access gate of the property where we met up with Grant Sommers who is the dive site supervisor for 1080

We then had to fill out and sign another indemnity form before we could enter the property and dive 1080 Sink.. The dive supervisor gave us a short dive brief and then we entered the property then drove to the dive site.... I could not get over how clear the water was, the sinkhole looked eerie the way the sun shone onto the giant limestone rock walls, the water looked so black dark and cold....

We then geared up and walked down to the water edge where we did the giant stride into the dark water of 1080. We then descended to 10meters did all our checks and followed the fixed guideline down to a depth of 30meters At 30 meters I then tied off and ran my own guideline down to 40meters from here on it kept on dropping down really steep. Following the limestone rock wall in front of me the only light I could see was from my 21 watt hid light I could not see any natural light at all.. The dive felt cold and Erie it was a very dark and the place I was visiting looked very lonely.. Some parts of the sink can silt out very easy but it was amazing swimming through these limestone passages that just kept on going deeper and deeper with no bottom in sight. 1080 sink is not as

big as Kilsby Sink as in space as it's a bit more closed up but all up it was a top sinkhole to dive. Water temp was 15 degrees. MY dive run time was 85 minutes gas used EAN24 and EAN80 for my deco

After the dive we had lunch and I mingled in with the other divers .. I also found out this sinkhole got its name 1080 from fox Poisson that had been put around close to the site for wild foxes that were causing grief to the live stock on the property..... Shortly after lunch after we had got up a bit of surface time. We then geared up again and went back in . This time I took my dive camera to get some underwater photos of the dive site I took the right hand side passage.

Dive time was 63 minutes with a max depth of 40 meters cave Penetration distance was only 80 meters into the cave area but it still kept on dropping down

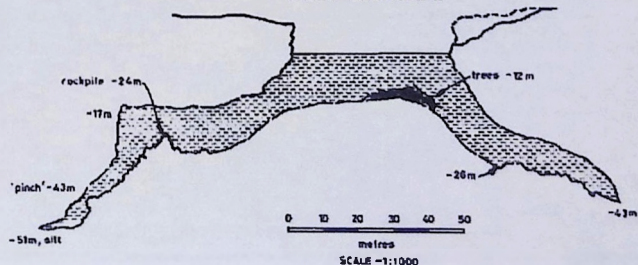
.All up the dive on the day was good I also found out Barnoolt estate has another two sinkholes on the property you can dive. The next site I hope to dive in is Blacks hole but that site is still closed to diving at this stage as I have been told they need to do work on the site and place steps in for better access

All up I had a top weekend. I dived two other cave sites and had a lot of fun and was in with good company Its always the way when I go diving in Mt Gambier the time just goes to quick

Darren Pearce



TEN EIGHTY



VSAG Christmas Party

Sunday 9th December
Noon till 5 p.m.



Beaumaris Yacht Squadron
Beach Road, Beaumaris

Between Charmar. & Cromer Roads. Melway 86 68

Located on the shores of Port Phillip Bay
Enjoy the magnificent views of the Bay

Spit Roast & All Food Supplied

Licensed for all drinks (not BYO)

All plates & cutlery supplied

\$30 per person

Must pay VSAG Treasurer by 15th Nov

Early Bird Special · Pay by 1st Nov to enter prize draw

1st Prize: 8 bottles | 2nd Prize: 4 bottles

Hunter Valley Shiraz 2005 valued at \$16 per bottle

Traditional VSAG Raffle
Prizes! Prizes! Prizes!





Join us at the Yacht squadron on Sunday 9th December 2007



The 'OLD HOGS'

The Case of the Missing Dives. From the Files of "The Shadow"

The phone rang. It was dark outside and I'd just finished another bottle of Bourbon. When you're a Private detective it doesn't pay to ignore the phone. I let it ring a few times to let them think I was busy.

"Whaddya want?" I asked, trying to sound more like Humphrey Bogart than Maxwell Smart.

It was 'Big AL'. He came straight to the point. "We need your help! Someones stolen our dives". As he spat out the words, I could tell he was hurting. He rambled on for a few more minutes about nothing in particular. I cut him off. "Who did this to you Big Fella "I said "Give me an idea where to start and I'll get them back for you" I tried to sound re-assuring, but I didn't even sound convincing to me. The only clue he could give me was the weather and some Spanish thug called El Nino.

I'd heard the name before, but couldn't remember where. I hung up the phone and took a swig from a new bottle. I knew if I went downtown and asked around, some lowlife would point me in the right direction.

The cab dropped me off at a Bar called Bells. The owner was wiping a beer glass clean with a used handkerchief. I got straight to the point. He looked at me with a glare than could freeze axle grease. He told me that word on the streets was that a guy called Jumpsuit Jack might just know the answers.

I'd had a run in with Mr Jumpsuit a few years earlier. He'd tried to kill me somewhere between Pt Lonsdale and Sorrento. He was not a man to be trifled with. But I knew his weakness. He was fond of Curry and was a creature of habit. I found him slumped on the bar at the local Yacht Club. He was into his 3rd helping of Vindaloo and drinking someone else's red wine. I pulled the chair up next to him. He looked at me with a smirk and tried to stick a fork in my eye. I was too quick for him this time and after I slapped him around for fun, I got to the point.

"What have done with all the Dives Lawler?" I said prodding him with my fist.

"Its not me" he spluttered "Its that El Nino and the bad weather... I just can't get anyone interested in going" He was all glassy eyed and shaking. I wasn't sure if he was shaking from fear or withdrawal symptoms. I don't like to kick a man when he is down, but its part of the job. It has to be done. After sinking the slipper a few times I checked his mobile phone to see who he had been in contact with.

Armed with some new leads I caught a cab to Frankston. I told the cabbie I had a gun and he said the ride was free. I liked his style.

The guy I was after was running a business out of the front of his house and had a reputation as being a big tough guy. They called him Big Lloyd. I cased the joint and quietly slipped in the bathroom window. He had just left the toilet and as the stench hit me, I recoiled in agony.

He heard me dry retching and came at me like a mad bear on heat. He slugged me a couple of times and I decided to take a short nap. When I woke up he had me propped up on the couch watching a slide show of the VSAG Barrier Reef trip 2006. First, the beating, and now the torture! I couldn't take it, so I did the only thing that I knew would impress a tough guy. I wept openly.

He picked me up and hurled me through the door. He said I was banned for life. As he stood over me I asked him if he knew where all the dives had gone. He snarled and told me I was in too deep, this wasn't just a case of No Diving, but a conspiracy between El Nino, Weather Godman, and the Port of Melbourne Channel Deepening mob. The dives would come back he hissed. "Just be patient" He then gave me backhanders that would have killed an ox just to reinforce his point.

I wasn't convinced. I knew that somewhere out there people were diving. I just had to locate them. I limped around to the local pub to use the pay phone. The juke box was wailing out its one note song. Nobody here knew about the dives either.

I rang Big AL. I told him it was no use. Just write off the dives for July and August I told him. We are up against big odds and they play hard. He hung up in disgust. I caught a cab home. It had been a rough night. I poured myself a double. I knew that if the situation didn't improve and I kept on drinking a case of bourbon a day, within a few years I'd become an alcoholic.

As the morning sky started to lighten, I noticed the gale force winds had eased. I poured myself a stiff drink and checked my computer for the Bay Forecast. Eureka!! The forecast was all good for Sunday. Maybe, just maybe, we'd get a dive in. I told the cat the good news. The cat of course said nothing.

POSTSCRIPT:

After a terrible 6 weeks of gale force winds and mountainous seas it is now history how at the very end of August 2007, VSAG had possibly one of the best days imaginable on the Nepean Wall and the 90ft Sub. The tragic events of July and early August that led to our hero attempting to find the missing dives is now but a fading bad memory.

Memorable Dive Days: Eden Xmas 98

I was camping at Boydtown at Eden during Christmas 1998 with an old dive buddy called Graham Stevens. The weather had been a bit unpredictable and we had managed a few dives around the headlands in his boat and a couple of shore dives at "The Gutter" at Green Cape. The diving had been good, but an article in 'Sportdiving In Australia' had us salivating in anticipation of diving a new recently discovered wreck.

Mobile phones were new on the scene and I used one to ring the Charter operator up the coast to book in. He spoke to me for a few minutes to check out my credentials and booked the 2 of us in for January 1st. He told us that this was the next time he had sufficient numbers to warrant going out. As I was going home on the 1st it was going to be a long day.

News Years Eve was low key as we kept the partying to a minimum in anticipation of a long drive and great dive on a new wreck some 3 hours up the coast. Sleep wasn't easy to come by as rival groups screamed and ultimately brawled through the campground. One drunken reveler accidentally set fire to his own tent and burnt it to the ground. An interesting night, to be sure.

We left in semi darkness to drive to Narooma for a 9.00 am departure. Arriving at the Wharf we met the skipper and his deckie and threw our gear onto the boat. On the way out we listened to the other group of divers on board talk of their experiences and favourite dives and realized they weren't a bad bunch, just a tad crazy that's all.

Arriving at the dive site the skipper briefed us as to the layout of the wreck and the manner in which the dive would be conducted. Excitement mounted. This was a 100-year-old wreck only discovered recently lying in 90ft of clear water smothered in coral and fish. It just doesn't get any better than this.

He through over his large red marker buoy on a weighted line and it immediately sank. The current was raging through the site and was so strong his buoy was pulled under by the force of it, and wasn't seen again. He promptly told everyone

that due to the excessive current he was not allowing any dives today on this site and was going to take us to Montague Island.

A couple of the other group expressed a degree of indignation at this, especially that they didn't pay big bucks to dive Monty when they had their own boats and had been diving on it every day. The skipper was unmoved. Graham and I sat quietly, if not somewhat crestfallen at the turn of events. Stoically we agreed that Montague was after all a pretty fair old dive in its own right, so we shut up and watched.

We then proceeded to do 2 dives on the Northern area on some pretty average reef in about 60ft with only 30ft visibility. Neither dive was worthy of remembering for more than a week.

Whilst at the island several very impressive private boats owned by friends of the other divers on board paid us a visit. The charter dive group exchanged friendly banter with the other boats for a while till they zoomed off to enjoy the day. I have to say I was impressed by the camaraderie and the well set up dive boats of this mob.

After arriving back at the wharf we grabbed our gear and started back to Eden, where my good lady wife was currently packing the tent and car for a rapid departure to Melbourne. Arriving back at Boydtown at 5.00pm I leapt from Grahams car, said goodbye to his clan and jumped into my completely packed car and took off. My dreams of diving the "Lady Darling" remained unfulfilled.

Fast-forward 8 years.

I was sitting around the campfire late one night at Fountains Caravan Park at Eden on the 2006 Christmas trip. I was an interloper from another club and VSAG were being both hospitable and magnanimous in allowing me and several other non-members to join them. As the night wore on I looked at Barry Truscott sitting next to Gerry DeVries, and suddenly realized where I'd seen them before. They were the 2 ringleaders on the charter boat all those years ago, and Andy's' boat

was one of the 2 boats we spoke to at the island.

I piped up that I'd seen them before and told them when.

You know what? They were still indignant that the skipper hadn't let them dive in the current on the "Lady Darling" all those years ago. Talk about maintain the rage.

It turns out none of us have since gotten onto the Lady Darling. My dreams of diving the "Lady Darling" are still unfulfilled, but it would seem I'm not alone.

Greg Richards Sept 2007

WEIGHT LOSS PROGRAMS

A guy calls a company and orders their 5 day/5kg. weight loss program.

The next day, there's a knock on the door and there stands before him a voluptuous, athletic, 19 year old babe dressed in nothing but pair of Nike running shoes and a sign round her neck. She introduces herself as a representative of the weight loss company. The sign reads: "If you can catch me, you can have me." Without a second thought, he takes off after her. A few miles later, huffing and puffing, he finally catches her and has his way with her. The same girl shows up for the next four days and the same thing happens. On the fifth day, he weighs himself and is delighted to find he has lost 5kg. as promised.

He then calls the company and orders their 5-day/10kg program.

The next day there's a knock at the door and there stands the most stunning, beautiful and sexy woman he has ever seen in his life. She is wearing nothing but Reebok running shoes and a sign round her neck that reads: "If you catch me you can have me." Well, he's out the door after her like a shot! This girl is in excellent shape and it takes him a while to catch her; but when he does, it's definitely worth every muscle cramp and wheeze, so for the next four days, the same routine happens. Much to his delight, on the fifth day he weighs himself only to discover that he has lost another 10kg. as promised.

He decides to go for broke and calls the company to order the 7-day/20kg program. "Are you sure?" asks the representative on the phone - "This is our most rigorous program." Absolutely," he replies, "I haven't felt this good in years." The next day there's a knock at the door and when he opens it he finds this huge, muscular, 7ft black man standing there wearing nothing but pink running shoes and a sign around his neck that reads: "I'm Nigel . If I catch you, you're mine..."

23/9/07 Dive report New wreck dive

Pioneer

Three weeks ago I was asked by a friend who I have gone cave diving with over in MT Gambier if I would be interested in doing a dive on the Pioneer from what I understand is a old dredge. That had been scuttled out in the ship graveyard somewhere Off Barwon heads I jumped at this opportunity how exciting a new wreck for me to dive on WOW!!!

Saturday night I spent some time on the internet communicating with my dive buddy and finalising our dive plan ... AS the wreck sits in 45 meters of water this was going to be a planned decompression dive. The total run time for the dive would be 53 minutes the plan was to descend to a max depth of 45meters for 20 minutes. Our breathing gas for the bottom would be air 21% and for our deco gas we chose EAN50% which was carried on us in a sling tank for our deco gas. Our first gas switch on the deco would be at 21meters where we had planed our first stop and the total deco duration would be around 33 minutes... I was really looking forward to this dive as this would be my first dive on the Pioneer the weather was looking good for the dive. The only draw back for the whole dive was getting up so early for the dive.

Sunday morning I awoke at 5am as I had to be down at Sorrento by 630am... There was not a breath of wind I new the day was going to be just magic. Shortly after I arrived down at Sorrento where I met up with some of my friends at this stage the wind had pick up a bit and was blowing from a northerly direction. We started kiting up I then strap on my doubles and grab my sling tank and walked out to the boat. When I got out to board the dive boat I noted the waves were really knocking the boat about on the jetty and it took a bit of judgement boarding the boat with out falling over and breaking my neck...

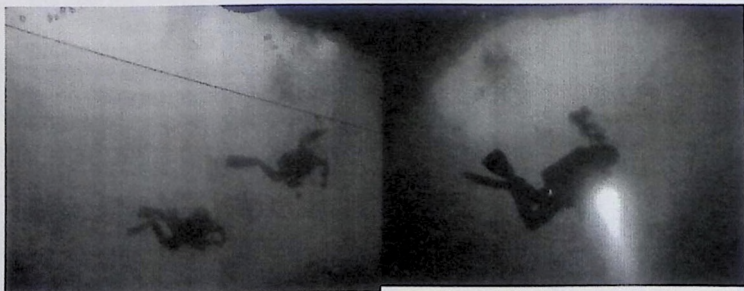
The boat left the jetty at 730am and we arrived at the dive site at 9am... I had anticipated the water visibility for the dive would be really clear but this was not to be. As soon as we got to the dive site the water looked dark and murky green. At 930am we hit the water and descended down the shotline as I was descending it had moved off the wreck. As the line was vertical and I knew something was not quite right. Below 25 meters it started getting darker and darker and the water visibility got less and less. Finally I got to a sandy bottom at 46.7meters with no wreck in site. The shotline weight was hanging a meter off the sandy bottom to top it off the visibility was only about 3 meters and the water temp was around 13 and there was not much light coming through and it was almost like night dive....

Shortly after I noted a faint light single in the murky water and we swam over towards the light single and low and behold we stumbled onto the wreck.... Wow what could I

say just awesome cooee!! this would have to be one of the most intact wrecks I dived on so far in the grave yard, apart from the subs.. The ship was siting perfectly upright on the sandy bottom. Around the mid ship I noted a large school of yellow tail swimming around the site. On the dive I was glad I had my Salvo 21 watt Hid dive light as the light made a real difference making the wreck come to life showing its true details and colors. We swam along the ships deck at 44meters and got to the bow of the ship, here we came across a small hatch which was only big enough to fit one person through at a time We then swam inside the wreck into some compartments where I noted there was a lot of sand that had been washed in possibly from a storm. We then followed the compartment along and came out another entrance that looked like a door. We went through and found our selves back on the out side. We then proceeded towards the stern off the ship and found the shotline was siting right in front of us, it appeared someone had move the shotline to the stern of the wreck. It was great we did not have to look for the shotline By this time our 20 minutes on the bottom was up and it all went so quick> I then looked at my dive buddy and was given the single to ascend. We slowly ascended up the shotline and we carried out our deco stops53 minutes later I was back on the surface with a big smile on my face and we then boarded the boat..... Shortly after we were offered some warm tomato soup and some fresh cake and slowly motored back to Sorrento by 1145am I was back at sorrento boat ramp

All up I had a great days diving it was good to be diving with some new friends and good company and to top it off it was great I had the chance to dive a wreck I had not dived before its always good to explore new dive sites. As I feel it opens up new possibilities.....

Darren Pearce



DIVING CAIRNS

Charlie Brincat

I arrived in Cairns early afternoon, checked in to the Taka dive shop and then floated around town for a few hours. We departed Cairns 5pm for a 5 day 4 night trip to the barrier reef. We dived the area known as the Ribbon Reefs which is up past Cooktown. We motored all night and the first dive in the morning was Challenger Bay. We then proceeded to Pixie Pinnacle and the Cod Hole which is the furthestest site north just off Lizard Island. We then ventured outside the reef into the Coral Sea to head to Osprey Reef. What a trip that that was! We were outside the protection of the reef and it was rough. On a scale to 10 the skipper said that the conditions were 8. We rocked and rolled all night without music. I didn't get any sleep because either my head or feet were banging against the walls. Still the pain was worth it. To jump off a boat look down as far as you can see and all you see is an uncountable number of sharks. What a buzz! On the way back we dived the Temple of Doom, Steve's Bommie and Split Reef. This was my third trip to the Barrier Reef. The sea conditions were quite rough compared to the previous 2 years. The dive masters were preaching vest inflation on the surface, slowly deflate your vest and descend. I found that most uncomfortable in the choppy conditions. It was easier to hit the water without any air in your vest and continue descending. Of course I lost points again. Overall the trip was just fantastic. Visibility was about 30 metres and water temp about 23 to 25. Just great for us oldies. I won't go into detail of what I saw as you are well aware of what's on the reefs. The highlight of the trip for me was a close encounter with a Minke whale. As I was returning to the boat after a dive I was looking down into the depths and could see something large approaching me. At first I thought it was a large shark and was a bit apprehensive. However as it got closer I could see that it was a Minke whale. It came up close and eyeballed me. At Split Reef you could also hear humpback whales calling. You have to hold your breath for that.

What intrigued me was that out of 22 divers on the boat only 2 were Aussies. The rest were from all parts of the world. Do we Aussies take our Barrier Reef for granted?

After the dive trip I planed to go to Magnetic Island as I was interested to see what it was like and to see whether it would be suitable for future holidays. I was told that I could dive the "Yongala" from there. Little did I know that it was a 3hr boat ride from there. As the conditions were rough they postponed the trip a number of times and I missed out. On further investigation I found out that I should have stayed at Ayr which is only 1hr to the "Yongala".

The check in at Townsville airport was interesting and quite unusual. I placed my metallic possessions on the tray and proceeded through the check point and set of the alarm. After reassuring the attendant that I had nothing on me I tried again and passed. I then went to collect my hand luggage and noticed that they were paying particular attention to it on the x-ray. They asked what I had in my bag and they accepted

my answer of regulator without an inspection. I proceeded further and was pulled aside for a fertilizer test. "Why me?" I asked. "Just random" was the reply. They swabbed my belt, bag and shoes. After testing negative I was allowed to proceed. As I waited in the departure lounge I was approached by an airport employee doing a survey. I sure was popular at this airport.

SCUBA Divers Federation of Victoria

GENERAL Meeting Minutes – Tuesday 2nd October 2007 @ The Nott.

Some editorial first:

Once again I would like to remind clubs:

There is a huge need at the moment for the SDFV, but it's falling on too few volunteers to keep it running.

We need more people turning up to meetings, as well as putting their hand up to attend the many meetings the SDFV is invited to. This doesn't necessarily mean a commitment to go to monthly meetings, but more step up when others can't attend.

Minutes of General Meeting

Apologies: A.Beckhurst,, , LVSC [Evelyn], J.Griffiths.

Present: D Williams, A.Storen, J.Lawler, J.Hawkins, P.Cardinaletti, , D.Grimm R.Day, T.Van den Blink

Correspondence listed and moved as accepted.

Sunken Assets:

John Hawkins provided a summary report and thanked those who helped. The SDFV committee once again thanked John on the excellent way he pulled it all together. Copyright has been gained for putting presentations on website [photos are already there]. Waiting on award recipient contact details to send out digital photos.

Commercial Report: Have managed to pay out all Sunken Assets out of current accounts. HC cheque arrived in time for this meeting so SDFV is only a few tens of dollars down from sunken assets. RMIT still to be paid.

HSAC John unable to attend last meeting, but picked up rumor from it that flinders pier will be dug up and replaced – A Parks Vic project.

Cup Weekend Prom BBQ – refer to Priya's email asking for numbers for catering purposes.

This is the major fund raiser for the SDFV.

Due to some misunderstandings it looks like LVSC will run it next year, and SDFV committee will try and cobble it together for this year. A 5 year roster will be created and tried to be stuck to for future years.

Fisheries related:

Fisheries Rock Lobster (cray) management plan review – SDFV position on recreational rock lobster pots revisited. Summary is that we can't support any move to introduce the idea even of recreational lobster pots. Daniel Ho and Ian Williams have been put forward (accepted) as representatives for SDFV for the Rock Lobster Plan eting. There was quite a bit of discussion. Some more detail recorded in dan's unofficial notes.

ABALONE Management Plan

This process is on hold really until effect of virus known. SDFV still pushing for sensible "all weekend fishing" instead of random selection of dates.

Please contact John Hawkins telepower@telepower.com.au ph. 9764 2001 If you want to volunteer.

VARS: John Lawler gave a summary of the current state of play and the organizations involved. SDFV needs people to volunteer onto some subcommittees – first example would be the site management subcommittee. If you think you might like to represent general SDFV club peoples interests on this issue – please contact dan grimm sdfvdan@sdfv.org.au ASAP. SDFV policy on ex-hmas Canberra: Access for all that is Equitable!!!.

Worksafe

John Hawkins still waiting for written statement from them, but is quite convinced that recreational scuba clubs are not being targeted [as per worksafe's remit and the project preamble on website]. They have no heads of power to target clubs. There is an "assessment tool" document – a check list of things the worksafe people will be looking for at work places – similar to sdfv code of practice in some regards.

During discussion it was again pointed out that the "adventure activity standard" for scuba diving points to SDFV code of practice for recreationals, and to DIVA code for commercial diving processes.

SDFV Codes of Practice –

Getunder club provided their review of the codes – and it was agreed that we will send them out and ask for comment via email to issues@sdfv.org.au mailing list.

Please review this and your clubs procedures regularly!!!!!! If you notice any errors, outdated info, or other problems please let the SDFV committee know as soon as possible. It is a 'live' document and meant to be updated.

VRFISH Priya

Pots for rock lobster was discussed again. [since then some letters have gone out to vrfish]. A motion was raised and passed that: SDFV does not support fishing with recreational rock lobster pots and believe raising the issue damages scuba diver outcomes in fisheries management. [There is a slight problem here as I. Williams wasn't at meeting to defend his position. There have been discussions outside the committee meeting with him though].

The Western Vic Abalone virus is still a big issue. Potential RIS Bag Limit review soon.

So once again I'll type it:

SDFV is not going to survive as an organization unless more people get involved!!!

Regards, Daniel Grimm www.sdfv.org.au



“A TOUGH CALL”

DIVE REPORT FOR SATURDAY 1ST SEPTEMBER

While it seems Spring had sprung it was really just the end of August and up until Thursday it was wonderfully warm and sunny. Thursday saw big winds starting to develop and by Friday the weather bureau was issuing gale force warnings for the bay..they got this right! Huge swells were crashing on the beach at Ricketts Point and the water was turned to a muddy brown.

VSAG had moved the dive back to Saturday and whilst the BOM forecast was looking good I had some early reservations as to what to do for the dive day...I spoke to some of our learned divers who felt the day could be “a doubtful day!”

Pondering this predicament I recall many occasions where we pulled the dive only to be advised the day and conditions were perfect for diving...A tough call had to be made!! The call was “the dive will go ahead”, 9.30 AM at Sorrento with Boarfish Reef as the dive site location.

Support for the dive plan was exceptional. Mick Jeacle, ever reliable, had his boat available and by Friday night we had 8 divers booked in...brilliant!!

Trevor Williams had arrived in town for the brief weekend stay from his temporary home in Canberra and he and his daughter Sarah were part of the team. Great to see them both out diving with us.

The Teams: Alan Storen, Trevor Williams, Sarah Williams were my dive team.

Rob Kirk, Greg Richards, Bridey Leggatt on Mick's divers.

Well the day was shaping as near to perfect as could be wished...the wind was from the North West but a bit testy at around 15knots as we headed over the bay, and a bit choppy. As the day progressed however we were to enjoy a classic Port Phillip Bay, soft gentle winds, calm peaceful waters...just great to be in this place today!

Mick and his crew were just over the North Wall and this site is a well known iconic dive location and soon the Dive Victoria charter boat was also on the site.

Slack water had almost arrived, dive plan set, and my three divers we over and into the murky bay waters. The slight current was ebbing which took the divers south of the dive site and into deeper water. The combination of murky water and deep water was considered unsafe to continue this dive and, good safety sense prevailing, the divers returned to surface and rejoined the boat.

Mick's crew did their dive safely and enjoyed their experience, despite the dirty water. Popes Eye for a lunch break. Divers from both boats decided to dive the southern end of this brilliant Marine Park, Greg Richards entering through the well known break in the rocks and my crew being dropped off from the boat.

Diving over we headed back, a brief stop on the way to see the new seal pups at play. Boats cleared and off to the Sorrento pub for some cool ales to end another brilliant VSAG club dive day...wonderful!!!!

Thanks to Mick for his boat and to all the divers participating in this dive day...

The Pinnacles Sunday 24th Sept 2007

After cancelling the planned dive day to Phillip Island last week due the posting of a Gale warning, it was with some trepidation that a boat load of intrepid VSAGers took to the waters off Phillip Island.

The forecast was for 10-15 knots from the North which in theory should have been perfect. After launching from Newhaven Boat ramp at 10.00 am we headed out into what looked like a flat smooth sea. After a short 15min boat ride we arrived at "The Pinnacles" to find the sea quite calm, but the colour looking a tad greenish. Upon descending onto the top of the main Pinnacle it was obvious that an algal bloom was severely limiting viz. The visibility was probably only 4-5 metres and as we rounded the pinnacle to the better part of the dive it improved, although it did block out a lot of light and made for an interesting midday dusk dive. Several of the crew had never dived this spot before and despite the gloomy conditions they found the fish life to be amazing and they were very impressed with the sheer walls and soft coral growth. As we approached the 25m-30m range the swaying sea tulips and the ever present yellow zooanthids made for a colourful and spectacular spectacle. As we surfaced a squall approached and we headed around to Bird Rock for lunch and then did a shallow second dive near the tip of Cape Woolamai itself. Although only shallow this spot is very enjoyable and has good fish life, draughtboard sharks, millions of abalone and the odd cray. As we departed for the ramp we spent 10 minutes watching a seal annihilate what was left of a cuttlefish, whilst several albatross and sea-gulls tried to get in on the action. Better than watching it on a documentary on the idiot box by a country mile. Yet another great day out on the water. Except perhaps for the cuttlefish, who quite frankly had had better days.

Shadow



Sunken Assets 2007

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

On Sunday 19th August, the SCUBA Divers Federation of Victoria (SDFV), together with the RMIT Underwater Club, Heritage Council of Victoria, Heritage Victoria, the Maritime Archaeology Association of Victoria (MAAV) and the Dive Industry of Victoria Association (DIVA) all combined to put on Sunken Assets 2007 — a day exploring our magnificent maritime heritage. The day was organised to mark the 25th anniversary of Victoria's Historic Shipwrecks Act.

I happened to misread the event programme and ended up arriving at Storey Hall very early at 8:30 am, only to find Alan Storen and John Lawler already there helping to set things up. Alan created a mini-stand area to promote VSAG. During the course of the day we spoke to a number of people about the benefits of joining VSAG.

Alongside the VSAG area, Des Williams set up an impressive display promoting the Historical Diving Society SE Asia & Pacific (www.classicdiver.org). I got to meet Des for the first time, plus chat with both Des and Jeff Maynard about their organisation and some diving history.

Alan Beckhurst also arrived and set up an area to promote the GetUnder club. (We have a double agent in our midst!) Quite a few other VSAG members also attended the event.

As people arrived, interesting discussion groups were formed around the room. It was obvious that plenty of people were catching up with old friends. Newcomers to diving like myself were getting to meet some of the people they had only previously heard about.

Eventually we were all summoned to enter the auditorium and proceedings began, with Terry Laidler of ABC Radio fame as the master of ceremonies. The day's presentations included:

- **Learning to love intimacy** — the relationship between concretions and iron shipwrecks, by **Dr Ian MacLeod**, Western Australian Museum.
- **Iron Zeppelin** — The SS City of Launceston, **Ross Anderson**, Western Australian Museum.
- **Diving to Discovery** — a history of Australia's underwater pioneers, **Jeff Maynard**, Historical Diving Society.
- **A shipwreck was a godsend to these people** — the diverse impacts of the Loch Ard on a remote colonial community, **Kate Fielding**, Historian.

- **Decipher, Discover, Dive** — Pioneers of Victoria's deep shipwreck discoveries, **Mark Ryan**, Southern Ocean Exploration.
- **Ying and Yang** — divers, nature and wrecks, the Yongala experience, **Andy Viduka**, Museum of Tropical Queensland.

Preserving Ship Wrecks

For me, the presentation by Dr Ian MacLeod on the relationship between concretions and iron shipwrecks was the highlight. As Stuart and Helena Cannon had told us when they gave their presentation on the AE2 Submarine at a VSAG meeting earlier in the year, Ian certainly knows how to make this subject fascinating and entertaining.

Ian explained how they go about measuring the pH and voltage levels at various points on wrecks and are thus able to measure the rate of deterioration. He showed us how the rates varied at different locations on wrecks based on factors like the exposure to currents.

At the start of the lunch break, I offered to buy Ian lunch and he accepted. Thus John Lawler, Alan Storen and myself (all VARS volunteers) got to talk with Dr MacLeod over lunch about how we could extend the useful life of the HMAS Canberra as a dive site. We also asked him about ways to protect the existing iron shipwrecks in Victoria.

Ian told us how he had used aluminium engine blocks obtained for the price of a slab of beer from scrap yards as the basis for the anodes on many shipwrecks. The anodes are then attached electrically via sheathed copper cables to appropriate points on the wreck. He warned us that if the site was such that the anodes were likely to sink into the bottom, or be covered, then using zinc blocks for the anodes would work better.

VSAG has a long history of spawning other groups to tackle diving issues. Maybe it is time for us to take up the challenge of helping to preserve our ship wrecks. If we could make the subs and some of the other prime wrecks we dive on last a lot longer, so that they can be visited by future generations, it would certainly be worthwhile doing so. The methods that Dr MacLeod described certainly seem able to be deployed and monitored by volunteers. With some minimal financial assistance from the dive industry, it is a goal that should be achievable to the benefit of all divers.

Finding Ship Wrecks

The presentation by Mark Ryan, from Aquability, on how the Southern Ocean Exploration team (www.southernoceanexploration.com) go about finding wrecks was also fascinating. Certainly SOE are having a lot of success, having found wrecks like the SS Alert, Don Diego, Verulam, SS Queensland, TSS Kanowna, TSS Cumberland etc.

It would be exciting to be a part of such teams, though the diving they do to verify the typically deep wrecks they find is way beyond most recreational diver's capabilities (certainly mine).

The costs the volunteers cover are also very steep. The team members pay for the capital equipment they use, including the side scanning sonar and computers. Mark mentioned how the gas costs for some of the deep dives they do can be around \$200 per dive, and then they share boat fuel costs on what can be long and expensive outings.

Diving Pioneers

The presentation by Jeff Maynard on the history of Australia's underwater pioneers was a real eye opener for me. I learnt that while the Aqualung may have been invented in France, it had a combined first and second stage. The separate first and second stage system that the regulators we use today is based on was invented just a year or so later right here in Melbourne, Australia.

Apparently once the Aqualung company realised how much better the Australian system was, they came to Melbourne and purchased the manufacturing company. Then they created the brand US Divers to sell the Australian regulators overseas.

As Jeff pointed out, if some of the world firsts that were achieved here in Australia had occurred in the USA, the people involved would be known worldwide, and we'd probably have seen multiple feature movies and documentaries about their exploits.

It was shocking to learn that there are no significant displays covering diving history in the appropriate museums here in Victoria. It seems that the significant part played by Victorians to diving history is being totally overlooked by museum professionals. And so, once again, volunteers fill the need, but lack the resources to securely display the collections.

Regulating Ship Wreck Access

It was interesting to see the difference as to what the authorities deem to be the right level of protection of some shipwrecks. Andy Viduka's presentation on the management of the Yongala site in Queensland talked about the various measures they'd taken with regard to market buoys and mooring systems. He mentioned how they try to stress to dive operators that divers be told that good buoyancy control and not touching the wreck is essential. And yet I've been told that some dive operators take people doing their Open Water course to the Yongala, plus divers who have only just completed their Open Water course.

On the other hand, here in Victoria the SS City of Launceston is protected by the site only being opened up for diving at certain extremely limited times, by small groups of divers under direct supervision. Divers have to have 50 dives and be accompanied by a site supervisor.

One would hope that the most appropriate level of protection would be somewhere between these two extremes and that we'll get to dive overly protected wrecks like the SS City of Launceston more often.

Thank you

I don't know what the official attendance was at Sunken Assets 2007, but my guess is that there would have been about 150 people enjoying the day.

There were certainly many interesting discussions going on, and plenty of people catching up with others they hadn't seen in quite a while.

This certainly was a great day and congratulations to everyone involved in its organisation. Let's do it again sometime. Sooner rather than later!

SENIOR DRIVING

As a senior citizen was driving down the freeway, his car phone rang. Answering, he heard his wife's voice urgently warning him, "Herman, I just heard on the news that there's a car going the wrong way on the freeway. Please be careful!"

"Heck," said Herman, "It's not just one car. It's hundreds of them!"

DRIVING

Two elderly women were out driving in a large car - both could barely see over the dashboard. As they were cruising along, they came to an intersection. The stoplight was red, but they just went on through. The woman in the passenger seat thought to herself "I must be losing it. I could have sworn we just went through a red light." After a few more minutes, they came to another intersection and the light was red again. Again, they went right through. The woman in the passenger seat was almost sure that the light had been red but was really concerned that she was losing it. She was getting nervous. At the next intersection, sure enough, the light was red and they went on through. So, she turned to the other woman and said, "Mildred, did you know that we just ran through three red lights in a row? You could have killed us both!" Mildred turned to her and said, "Oh, crap, am I driving?"

Analysis Paralysis

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

Science is a cautious, sceptical, meticulous and self-correcting process that constantly seeks truth while never being able to determine it with absolute certainty. Just ask any scientist how much more research is needed on any subject and I guarantee you'll hear the same answer, "More."

Better yet, ask him or her what they really know for certain about their chosen field and you're likely to see more squirming than in a bucket of worms.

Such uncertainty, while a natural characteristic of science, makes for a common criticism that the public often throws in the direction of scientists. Anytime subjects involving science are in the public eye, you'll undoubtedly hear the common refrain, "Why don't you people ever give us a straight answer?"

The reason is simple, as any one schooled in the scientific method knows. It's because that's not the way science works. Unfortunately, the people responsible for managing our environmental resources and environmental policies need answers. And given the dire state of the world's natural resources, they need answers now, not in 10 years time.

The unseen nature of science also has another downside besides the time required for scientists to feel relatively confident about their findings. The ponderous process and lack of absolute assurance of truth can be used by those with ulterior motives to delay or even stifle actions that are counter to their interests. Even with all of the evidence pointing towards climate change and global warming, there are still naysayers representing special interests that deny the planet is in trouble.

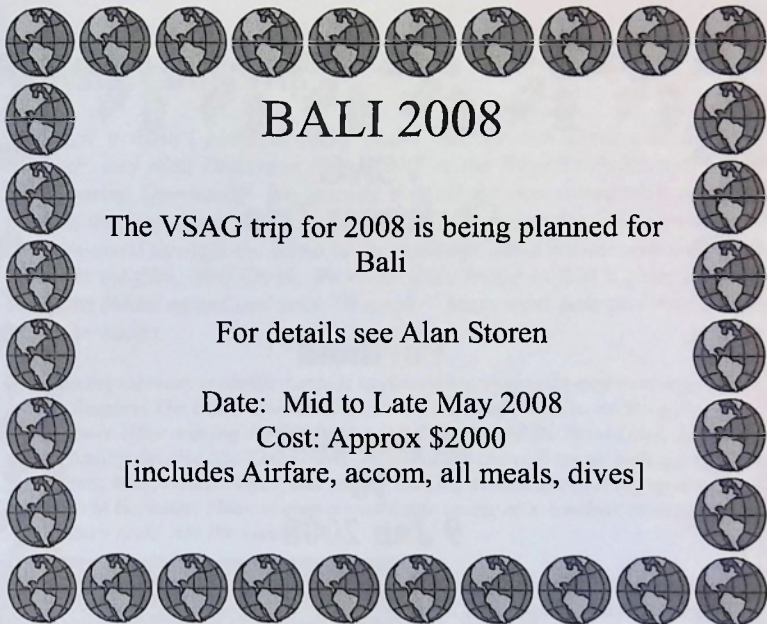
On the home front we've been seeing a local version of such special interests using such nay saying tactics with the Port Phillip Bay Channel Deepening proposal. What has been most alarming is the way the voice of those public institutions responsible for our environmental resources and policies, has been missing in action throughout the process.

While scientists may deal in a world where 95 percent confidence is a standard, the world we actually live in just can't afford that luxury. This is not a slam against scientists, but a statement of reality.

One approach to action in an uncertain world that's been advocated by environmentalists, as well as an increasing number of resource managers, is what's termed the "precautionary principle." It states that if an action or policy might cause severe or irreversible harm to the public, in the absence of a scientific consensus that harm would not ensue, the burden of proof falls on those who would advocate taking the action.

Sadly, here in Victoria, and Australia at large, this concept still hasn't been accepted by our policy makers. Had this concept been adopted as public policy a few decades ago, we almost certainly would not be in such a serious mess as we are in today.

So the answer seems obvious: If we wait and remain in a perpetual state of analysis paralysis, we'll surely find ourselves waiting in a dead ocean. The time for action isn't now; it passed us by a long time ago. The real question is, can we catch up?



BALI 2008

The VSAG trip for 2008 is being planned for
Bali

For details see Alan Storen

Date: Mid to Late May 2008

Cost: Approx \$2000

[includes Airfare, accom, all meals, dives]

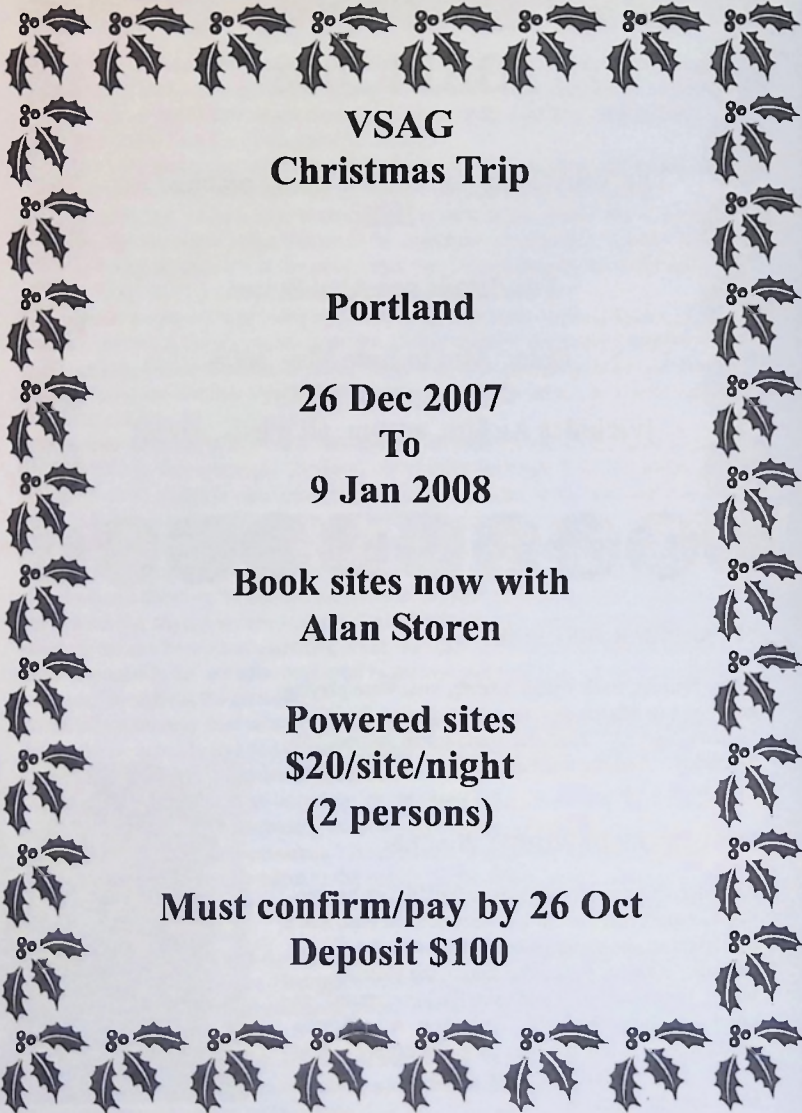
"I CAN HEAR JUST FINE!"

Three retirees, each with a hearing loss, were playing golf one fine March day. One remarked to the other, "Windy, isn't it?" "No," the second man replied, "it's Thursday." And the third man chimed in, "So am I. Let's have a beer."

LOST IN THE DARNDDEST PLACES:

An elderly Central Coast lady called 000 on her mobile to report that her car has been broken into. She is hysterical as she explains her situation to the dispatcher: "They've stolen the stereo, the steering wheel, the brake pedal and even the accelerator!" she cried. The dispatcher said, "Stay calm. An officer is on the way." A few minutes later, the officer radios in. "Disregard." He says. "She got in the back-seat by mistake."





**VSAG
Christmas Trip**

Portland

26 Dec 2007

To

9 Jan 2008

**Book sites now with
Alan Storen**

**Powered sites
\$20/site/night
(2 persons)**

**Must confirm/pay by 26 Oct
Deposit \$100**

Whyalla Cuttle Trip

Although it wasn't planned, Mary and I met up with Dave and Eddie from SWAMP, and Alan Dickerson from VSAG at the Whyalla Pub, some 12 hours after leaving Queenscliff. We learned that all the accommodation was booked out, but the Dive Shop put us on to a house in a Fauna Park, just outside town. As we weaved through the scrub in the darkness Mary commented that this was a bit like the film, Wolf Creek. We entered the house to find it clean and comfy, but when Eddie turned and said "Winnah!" Mary went pale and told me not to drink the water!

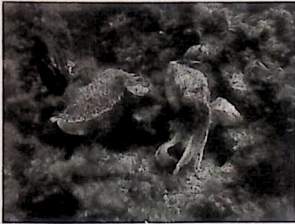
Considering we were at similar latitude to Newcastle, the nights and mornings were bloody freezing! The Cuttle Dive is about 22 k's North of Whyalla, at Stony Point near Point Lowly. After missing the dirt track turnoff, we visited the Point Lowly Lighthouse before finding the dive site. Once there, we found the site well set up with a large car park, seats, interpretative signs, and rubber matting around the gearing up area, and on the ramp to the water. There is even a steel cable acting as a handrail to assist you over the slippery rocks into the water.



I sat on a rock slab to don my fins and rolled forward into two feet of water to be greeted by my first cuttle. A short swim out to three metres depth had me surrounded by groups of cuttles engaged in a mating ballet. The vis was only five metres, but adequate at this depth, and the rocky bottom was smothered in a greenish brown, fluffy algae. In excitement, I began filming the cuttles around me, but I should have taken time to observe the behaviour patterns.

Each group of cuttles consisted of a large male, flared out to maximise his size, and surrounded by four or more other males gently making approaches. Under the large male was invariably a smaller female, with her smaller tentacles and usually two black spots on her back. The dominant male had to constantly shield his female from approaches from all directions. A black strobing pattern was common on the intruding males. I could almost hear the classical music accompanying this scene of billowing appendages and strobing patterns.

Occasionally, a smaller cuttle with shortened tentacles and black spots would approach



the group, but the wide outside tentacles would give him away as a crossdressing male. I did see this approach rewarded with a rejected coupling on one occasion, but most of the other cuttles could see through the disguise. Very occasionally, a pair of males would fight quite violently, ending in a cloud of ink and a hasty retreat. It seemed that there were

many times more males than females, but while looking under rocks for eggs I found quite a few females hiding. I don't know if they were laying eggs or hiding from the orgy!

If a male was successful at holding intruders at bay, he would try to couple with the female, but often she would wiggle free. A few times I witnessed couplings where the female turned very pale, and went limp, and I guessed the male had been successful in mating. This did little to stop the approaches from other males and the poor females were raped over and over. Smaller males were desperate enough to couple with females who were obviously near death, and I saw one male enthusiastically coupling with a headless body!

As the dives were shallow, tanks would last literally hours, so the limiting factor was film or freezing in the 13 deg water. I used a drysuit the first day, but had trouble maintaining trim, so went to a 7 mm wetsuit the next day and lasted ninety minutes without shivering. As there was little else living in the area, we made three long dives and felt we had covered the cuttles. We almost had the cuttles to ourselves on the Friday, but there were dozens of divers all day Saturday.

A local dive charter was offering a single tank, double dive for \$30 to the artificial reef and a rock wall. I had heard of the legendary 15 kilo snapper known as "Junkyard Dogs", so was keen to dive the artificial reef. Mary had left her Probe undersuit at the Stony Point Cuttle site, so would miss the boat dive as she raced back to find her suit still hanging where she left it. As I loaded gear onto the charter boat "Pheonix" a bottlenose dolphin stuck its head up over the gun-whales!



The skipper told us that there were a lot of fishing boats at the artificial reef, so we couldn't

dive there, and instead we went to an old collapsed jetty. The vis was about four metres, and the fluffy algae covered everything. There were a few fish, similar to Port Phillip species, and some schools of small whiting and pinkies darting about, but nothing to get excited over. We moved 800 metres to the rocky groyne for our second dive. Initially, there wasn't much to see as we headed along the shallow slope, but soon I noticed schools of sweep and snapper on the slope above us. We found a couple of miners hats half buried in the silt, then a Cobbler Wobbegong at the base of the rocks. Towards the end of the dive I could hear the odd thump and looked up to see a large school of 10 kg snapper swimming erratically at the limit of vis.



The boat dives were pretty ordinary, and \$30 for the double didn't seem as good now, but it may have been different had we gotten to the artificial reef. The dolphins performed for us again on the way to the pontoon, and this more than made value from the trip. When Mary came to pick me up I told her about the dolphins, and luckily a fishing boat came into the harbour, and was feeding the dolphins. They noticed Mary and I on the pontoon filming them and bought their boat closer for the show. We went to the ramp to thank them and they showed us one of the 10kg snapper commonly caught here.

The Fauna Park house was pretty well set up with gear washing tanks and a big clothes line. There was a barby and plenty of tea and coffee, and you could wander the grounds accompanied by Charlie, the resident emu. Even though it was a unique experience, I didn't feel the Cuttle dives justified the 1100 km drive to Whyalla, and it would best be done as part of a weeks expedition around South Australia, but probably not during the school holidays.

Alan Beckhurst

