

# FATHOMS

**AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2008**

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP



Sea Spider - Benita McDonough (Winner March photo competition)

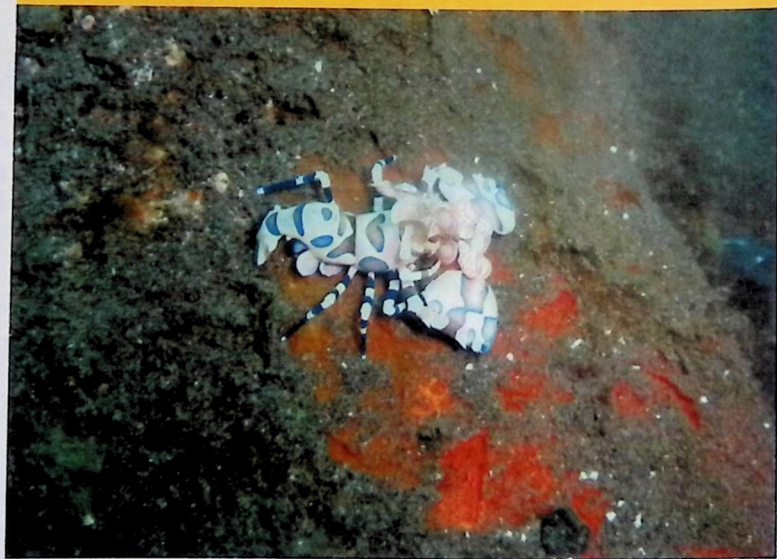
[www.vsag.org.au](http://www.vsag.org.au)

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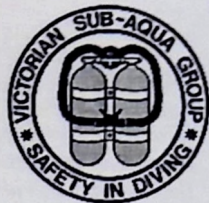




Bali Photos—VSAG trip 2008



# FATHOMS



*Official Journal of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group*

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

Bell's Hotel  
157 Moray Street (cnr Coventry Street)  
South Melbourne. 8.00 pm

**Editorial Submissions to:**

Alan Storen  
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storens@bigpond.net.au

## Editorial

*With winter well and truly set in there has been a number of weekend dives cancelled. I was forced to the local pool (with my grandson) just so I would not get withdrawal symptoms. We had a great weekend at Queenscliff for the Queen's birthday long weekend and many thanks to Mary and Alan for their hospitality at Boarfish Lodge. A report on this is included later in the magazine.*



*The Canberra (or to be more correct the exHMAS Canberra) has arrived and is now at Geelong being stripped and prepared for sinking. VARS hopes that this will be early in the new year but .... Public visits are not possible at this stage but you can see the ship from the end of Mackey Street North Geelong or, if you have a boat and can get to the Grain Wharf for an 'inwater' look - you get some idea of the size. JL, Mick Jeacle and I visited recently and we were very excited by the whole project. You can become more involved by joining VARS for \$50 and can volunteer any expertise you have. Much work is yet to be done from designing/printing T-shirts, to helping organise a 'Sinking Ball', to providing a safety boat on the day of the sinking, to ... well the list goes on. The cleaning is being done by contract so no manual work in this area is required. See one of the committee if interested in helping or go to the website [www.vars.org.au](http://www.vars.org.au). The ship does not come up on Google Earth as yet but should soon!*

*The arrow indicates its current site.*



The Xmas in July function was again great and Bridey is to be congratulated on her efforts. We need feedback as to whether we should try to run this type of function in 2009. -to Bridey Leggatt please.

Account for subs 2008/2009 went out with the last Fathoms and are now due. Please pay asap if you have not already done so.

Nominations for the committee are also due soon – to Greg Richards please. If you are keen to be involved please let your feelings be known.

The xmas trip proposal has gone around and around and, with no location being agreed on, the committee has decided to return to Eden. If you are a starter please contact Andy who has details of the sites and deposit. It is possible to go for just the first week, or just the second week, or both. Starts Boxing Day.

Lloyd and Benita ventured to Vanuatu in June and bring back many stories of the great diving. If I can not extract an article for this magazine then please ask them for an update.

The Melbourne Cup Weekend at the Prom is on again – see Andy M if interested. Booking open/close on 1 Sept.

The AGM is on the 18 September and this years' is different. Combined with some social activities as well as the usual reports, presentations, etc. Come along and make the night special.

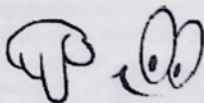
As I write this it is bucketing down, windy, horrible – looks like another pier dive tomorrow!

Hope to see you under the water soon.

As the submarine captain always says “ DIVE, DIVE, DIVE”

Keep blowing bubbles!

Alan



**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**

# Committee 2007 - 2008

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Committee meets 2nd Wednesday of the month  
ALL MEMBERS WELCOME

## Queens Birthday Long Weekend

### Alan Storen

*The weather forecast was reasonable and the hope of a dive or two was very good. With this in mind several VSAGers ventured down to Boarfish Lodge, Queenscliff to be hosted by Alan Beckhurst and Mary Malloy over the Queen's Birthday Long Weekend.*



*The advance party arrived on Friday night and set up in the Lodge. After a takeaway meal John Lawler, Lloyd Borrett and Benita McDonough settled in for the night. The rule was 'no snoring'. I do not know who broke the rule first except to say that JL and Benita did not get much sleep! Saturday morning the group were invited by Jason Salter, Managing Director of the Dive Victoria Group, to try out his new boat called Sea Dragon on its inaugural dive trip. JL was still feeling the effects of the flu and did not dive.*

*Jude Storen also watched from the deck. As for the rest – we had a fantastic dive on Lonsdale Wall at a site called Devils Dropoff. Viz was very good, water not too cold and a great dive was had by all. A great dive boat and sure to be used on exHMAS Canberra dives - 30 divers plus crew, all the creature comforts – toilets, stove, HOT air pumped through the dive area in winter, etc, etc*

*This was the first dive after Bali for me and the water was somewhat cooler. About half the temperature! But then again, water is water! No Mola mola (sorry Alan and Mary), no manta rays but still a great dive with lots to see. We had a quiet afternoon on the Saturday, watched some photos and video from Bali and ventured to the Victoria Pub for the evening meal.*

*The Saturday night rule was 'NO snoring'. I do not know who broke the rule first except to say that JL and Benita did not get much sleep! Fortunately Jude and I were in the house and spared the pleasure of Lloyd's musical notes. JL indicated that he was sure that we would hear it in the house and that it would out do the fog horn at Point Lonsdale. Even with his hearing aid out it was deemed to be a little loud.*



*Tippo joined us on Sunday morning and with 5 on JL's boat our first choice was a dive outside the Heads. The conditions forced us back inside and a dive*

*on Spectacular Reef - the dive lived up to the site name – spectacular!*

*AB took his downunder crew outside and dived the subs. Reports were – “It was not as good as Spectacular!”*

*Sunday night meal was a BBQ and a few reds – or was that a few reds and a BBQ. Again a few videos were watched. A very relaxed evening. Again the rule was ‘NO SNORING’. I do not know who broke the rule first except to say that JL and Benita did not get much sleep! [does this sound monotonous?? ] Boy can LB snore – or so I am told – Jude and I were snugly wrapped up inside the house.*



*The ex HMAS Canberra was due through the Heads on Monday and we were going to welcome it, but, after consulting the web site this was shifted to Tuesday. What else to do but go diving! We loaded JL’s boat and with Benita at the helm we [JL, AB and AS] again dived on Lonsdale wall this time in the region near the caves. A fantastic dive and*

*AB was rewarded with a good sized cray. Jude and Mary checked out the mini golf for next year’s challenge. Back to Boarfish and after farewell pies from the bakery we said our goodbyes and headed home. JL stayed on overnight to welcome the Canberra on the Tuesday; I hear he got a good nights sleep.*

*Another great weekend of diving, great company and good times. Book in next year and you will not be disappointed. PS We have a solution for Lloyd’s snoring!!!  
Alan*





## Member Profile: Barry Truscott



Year joined VSAG: **Joined VSAG in 1968**

How long have you been diving?: **Started diving in February 2005.**

First diving experience: **Diving from my first boat with my next door neighbor who had two sets of gear, no BC or Computers in those days just a J valve.**

Favorite diving location in Melbourne: **The reefs and bommies around the Heads, and off Queenscliff.**

Most memorable diving experience: **The dives we had from a charter boat, on world war two wrecks as we traveled through the Solomon Islands.**

Most unusual or amusing diving experience: **One afternoon off Wilsons Prom on the Mirabooka, When a person chased Pat Reynolds around the boat until he dived overboard and was still pursued. Its censored, so ask me sometime.**

Do you have a dive boat?: **Yes 17L Haines Hunter with a 150 mercury outboard motor, the most enjoyable possession I have ever owned, fantastic memories.**

If you could dive anywhere in the world, where would you most like to dive?: **A wreck that's never been dived before.**

Any diving words of wisdom: **Stay calm don't panic whatever the situation.**

Any other comments:

**Diving has taken me to some magic places, and I have met some amazing characters.**

[ profile by AS]

ED: **Bazza is a life member of VSAG and has made a very significant contribution to the club over many years. He and Marie are seen at most club and social activities and great to have around the place.**



## An Update from Bob Scott

Hi VSAGers

*A few of you older members may remember me from times long gone.*

*Not being able to dive any more, and retired,*

*I have taken up a new activity —gold panning & gold detecting, to keep my mind busy and body occupied. I haven't been over successful as of yet. My new found hobby (like diving) cost a lot more than the returns, but you do it because you enjoy - it's the activity, comradeship and the exhilaration of the hunt - in the case of you divers the odd looking, long - legged red thing and, in my case, a small nugget or two.*

*Gold hunting takes you to all parts of the country in the pursuit of the elusive, dull, yellow stuff. We been all over the Victorian golden triangle, all the big name places - Ballarat, Bendigo, Castlemaine, Ararat, Wedderburn and lots of little towns in between.*

*We have also been to a few places in Queensland, NSW and South Australia. Haven't been to West Aussie yet; hope to get there next year. W.A. is a little more rugged than most places that I have been - needs a lot more preparation and a little more bush skills than I have just now. We will probably hook up to a 'tag along tour' or go with someone who has been there before.*

*Again like diving, once you have your equipment you are set to go. My gear has cost me about \$4000 for at the time was a second hand, late model detector with only 5 hrs. of use. But now of course it has been superseded with a newer model with a few more bells & whistles. I'm still finding a little about them each time I go out.*

*When June & I go we prop in the local or closest caravan park. The 'cook' likes to be close to the showers etc. Other times if I go out with mate Graeme Blanchard - we camp in the bush and go smelly and dig our own latrines, camp under the stars, build great camp fires and eat too much (believe it or not no booze)! Graeme always finds more than I do, he can sniff it out a mile away.*

*It's great exercise, you don't seem to cover a great deal of ground, you might wander around the scrub and get 4 or 5 hundred metres from camp but it's the hills and the gullies and all the digging that you do that gets the heart pumping.*





*All detectors are metal detectors and you dig more holes with junk than holes with gold. By junk I mean bits of tin, nails, screws, bullets, shot gun pellets, etc. Sometimes you can be lucky and find old coins, buckles, musket balls and the like. That's part of the fascination of going gold prospecting.*

First picture: Gotcha ya! - you little bugger  
Second picture: Fist full of gold  
Third picture: Yours truly panning for gold  
at a panning comp. in novice section

Scottie



## Cunard Liner *Queen Mary* runs down HMS *Curacoa*.

By Mackenzie Gregory.

The mighty liner *Queen Mary*, made her maiden voyage crossing the Atlantic in 1936, on the 4th. of June in that year.

Come the declaration of war against Germany on the 3rd. of September 1939, she was quickly converted from a luxury liner to one of His Majesty's Troopships, and painted a drab battleship grey.

With her sistership, *Queen Elizabeth*, they carried hundreds of thousands of troops, the *Queen Mary* alone, by wars end is believed to have transported above 800,000 service personnel. These two *Queens*, were the world's largest and fastest troopships, their speed being sufficient to outrun any U-Boat, and they often travelled without any Naval escort.



*Mary.*

*Queen*

I can recall the whole of Sydney being agog in the early part of 1940, no one was supposed to know about the secret arrival of the fabulous *Queen Mary*, the world's greatest ship into Sydney Harbour. But, the whole foreshore lining the Harbour, and especially around both North and South Heads was crammed with people, all excitedly awaiting the arrival of this mighty vessel.

The "Buzz" was - The *Queen* is coming, then at long last patience was rewarded!

What a majestic sight, as she swept through the heads, like a Dowager Duchess, holding her skirts up high, not to impede her Royal and impressive progress.

Now she came into full view after entering into Sydney Harbour, one of the best Harbours found anywhere on earth, graced by the greatest ship created by man.

After she had dropped anchor, as a young Midshipman, I was sent off in a motor boat that I ran, to go alongside *Her Majesty*, to deliver some important mail. What a thrill, to bring in my boat to come alongside this Queen of the Seas.

Over two years later, this ship, on the 2nd. of October 1942, was about to be the major player in yet one more Tragedy at Sea.

The *QM*, with 15,000 United States troops onboard, was close to the coast of Ireland, and zigzagging to deter both U-Boats and German Aircraft that may be seeking her out. The British light Cruiser *Curacoa* of about 4,200 tons, was ahead of the troopship, as her escort, suddenly, *Queen Mary* was catching up with her escort, and on the leg of the zig zag that found her swinging fast towards the cruiser, and on a collision course. *Queen Mary*, some twenty times the size of *Curacoa* and steaming at 28.5 knots sliced the Cruiser neatly in two. She continued on her zig zag leg, whilst the two halves, had an ever widening gap of the North Atlantic growing between them.



Stan Warren, a survivor from HMS *Curacoa* - cut in two by the *Queen Mary*.

At the time of impact, many sailors on the upper deck of the Cruiser were tossed like falling Autumn leaves into the freezing and unforgiving waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

The stern half sank quickly, taking many crew members trapped behind closed watertight doors to their death.

The fore section of the ship soon followed the stern, and went down quickly. There had not been time to launch either boats or life rafts, it was all over so fast, and Ireland was 20 miles away. Survivors clung to wreckage, believing that *Queen Mary* would soon turn round and come back to rescue them.

Not so, she quickly disappeared over the horizon, and out of sight. Captain Cyril carried out his sailing orders: "Do not stop until you safely reach port."

An official enquiry into this disaster had to wait until after Victory Europe Day in 1945.

The Commissioners of the Admiralty sued Cunard White Star Line, alleging that *Queen Mary* was responsible for the accident.

One of the officers to survive, was Captain John Boutwood, who commanded *Curacao*, he emerged from an Admiralty inquiry acquitted without any reprimand. But, in court, the Judge held the Cruiser responsible, saying that: "Although the rules of the road at sea indicate that the overtaking vessel is to keep clear of the other, in this case, it did not apply."

He judged that the Cruiser could have avoided the collision, even up to seconds before the impact.

The Admiralty appealed this judgement, and this time, blame, was shared 1/3 to *Queen Mary*, 2/3 to *Curacao*, once again the Admiralty were not happy, and the case went before the House of Lords, where the Appeal Court's decision was upheld.



**HMS *Curacao***

As a Trooper, *Queen Mary* continued until August of 1945. Finally, she was sold to United States interests, and is moored at Long Beach in California, where she still attracts interest from the public at large.

Casualty list of those who died in *Curacoa* at this URL: <http://www.naval-history.net/xDKCas1942-10OCT.htm>

October 2nd  
1992  
( HMS *Nurton* )  
laying wreath at  
exact spot of  
sinking of  
HMS *Curacoa*

2.10.pm October  
2nd 1942.



Regards,

Mac.

**Mackenzie J. Gregory**  
email: [macden@melbpc.org.au](mailto:macden@melbpc.org.au)  
Mac's Web Log  
URL: [ahoy.tk-jk.net](http://ahoy.tk-jk.net)



## ‘Canberra’ Arrives!

It almost happened without anybody noticing. The Deed of Gift was finally signed in late May and the successful tenderer appointed.

VARS was advised in the last week of May that a large seagoing tug was already on its way to Rockingham in Western Australia and would soon begin towing the 138 metre long decommissioned warship to Geelong in Victoria. At that time, it was expected that it would take two to three weeks.

In the first week of June we were advised that ‘Canberra’ had departed Fleet Base West under tow and was now on her way to her new home. Various ETAs through Port Phillip Heads were proposed – but of course these were all dependant on the speed of the tow vessel on route. At first we believed that it was possible she would transit the heads on the Monday of Queen’s Birthday weekend. This got everybody pretty excited with the prospect of welcoming her with a large flotilla of boats. At this stage, we were coordinating on almost an hourly basis with State Government officials regarding media opportunities so that we could maximise the publicity opportunities.

As the time got closer, it became apparent that the Monday ETA was not going to happen. ‘Karori’ (the tug) and ‘Canberra’ finally arrived off Port Phillip Heads at around 2200 on the Monday, 9th June 2008. It was intended that the tow group cross the rip at 0630 on Tuesday, 10th June 2008, but problems with the tow line shortening delayed this. So all had to wait until the next tide at 1200 noon.

Two boats from the Dive Victoria Group (‘Nemo’ and the new ‘Sea Dragon’), plus Henderson Dive’s ‘Jack’ went out to the boarding grounds to greet Victoria’s latest dive attraction. As well as this small welcoming flotilla, a handful of lucky sightseers at Point Lonsdale’s Rip View lookout were treated to a fine day and a splendid view of the warship on its way to its final journey.

She entered the bay at noon on Tuesday and slowly made her way up the South Channel to lie at anchor that evening as the pilots would not attempt to berth a towed vessel after dark. TV Channels Seven and Nine News choppers covered the entrance, and Channel Seven landed to interview Dive Victoria’s Jason Salter, VARS president John Lawler, and Alan Beckhurst.

The event was well reported on the Tuesday, 10th June 6 p.m. news by Channel Seven and Channel Nine. John Lawler crossed live from Dive Victoria’s new dive boat ‘Sea Dragon’ to the Jon Faine morning show (ABC 774) and 3AW. On Wednesday John had a further 10 minute interview with Mark Bannerman on ABC Radio National at 6.30 a.m. On Thursday evening Mike Reed had a 15 minute interview on ABC Tasmania evening program.





This media coverage is aimed at a continual promotion of the ex HMAS Canberra as the centre piece to make "Victoria a world class temperate water diving destination."

#### **VARs Announces Patron**

We are very excited to announce that Lieutenant Commander (RAN retired) Mackenzie J. Gregory (Mac) has agreed to act as patron for VARs.

Mac joined the Royal Australian Naval College as a 13 year old Cadet Midshipman in January, 1936. His term was sent to sea in August 1939, as war was impending.

Mac, during WW2, served in our three 8inch cruisers, 'Australia', 'Canberra', and 'Shropshire', plus in the light cruiser 'Adelaide'. He was the Officer of the Watch in 'Canberra' when the Battle of Savo Island commenced at 0143 on August 9, 1942, the night she was sunk. He was in 'Shropshire' for the Japanese surrender at Tokyo Bay on 2 September 1945.

**For full update: [www.vars.org.au](http://www.vars.org.au)**

#### **Top four signs that you have been diving too much!**

- 4) You've stopped logging your dives because it's easier to just log your surface intervals.
- 3) Your "time to fly" is measured in months.
- 2) Your picture appears on fish identification tables.
- 1) You clear your ears prior to stepping on a down escalator.



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