

FATHOMS

JUNE—JULY 2008

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP



www.vsag.org.au

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Jervis Bay—Anzac 2008



FATHOMS



Official Journal of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group

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VSAG General Meetings
3rd 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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Editorial

Well winter is upon us and the water temperature in Melbourne is dropping. Not so for the lucky few that could escape to Bali in May with the temperature about 30C. It did drop to 24C on one dive when searched for Mola Mola, read sunfish, and a couple of other dives when there was a cold up-welling. The full story is included in a report later in the magazine.

VSAG combined with Get Under for a trip to Jervis Bay for the ANZAC long weekend. 10 members from VSAG and 7 from GetUnder enjoyed the hospitality of OceanTrek liveaboard from the Thursday night to the Sunday morning. Very good diving – see the reports by Alan Beckhurst and Jackie Storen.

On the social scene, Bridey is arranging a 'Xmas in July' function and the only date available clashes with the July meeting. The committee has decided to not hold a July meeting at Bells and instead encourage all to attend the function. There will be no formal meeting. Those that wish can still go to Bells for a social drink with other like minded members.

Enclosed with this edition of Fathoms is your annual fee invoice. Please pay promptly as it helps with our administration and ensures that you will not miss out on future editions. Payment can be made in person at the meetings, posted to the Treasurer or by Bank transfer. If you pay by bank transfer please make sure you include your name on the transfer so that it will be credited to your account.

We have listed several dives in the calendar for the June-July period but please be aware that the location is subject to the dredging activities and could be changed at short notice. We have some night dives and shore dives also listed. If you feel the cold drag out the dry suit and book in.

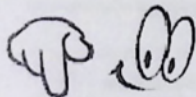
The AGM is coming up soon and nominations for the committee are being called. We have two vacant spots and both Pryia and I are automatically stood down after a three year period - but can be renominated. That leaves 4 spots to be filled and new members are always welcome. It is your club and your input is encouraged. If more than 4 nominations are received then a ballot will be held at the AGM. The nominated person and the proposer and seconder must be financial at the time of the AGM.

Mick Jeacle is currently arranging the 2009 trip – a liveaboard to Sulawesi at this point in time and details are included in this edition. Please let Mick know if you are interested. Liveaboards are great fun and there is usually lots of diving, minimal fuss, good food and company and well worth the effort. Sulawesi is known for some spectacular diving and lots of variety – walls, reef, wrecks, large pelagics, etc.

The Queen's birthday at Boarfish Lodge, Queenscliff will have happened by the time you read this and will be reported on in the next edition.

The exHMAS Canberra is coming – should be through the Heads on the 10th of June and tied up to a wharf in Geelong for stripping and cleaning. Congratulations to John Lawler and the members of VARS for their efforts over the past 2+ years. We might have a new wreck/ artificial reef to dive on very soon – at this stage looks like early 2009, just outside the heads near the J4 sub.

That all for now, run out
of surface interval
See you in the water
Alan



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

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Committee meets 2nd Thursday of the month
ALL MEMBERS WELCOME

VSAG TO SPODGINGTONS REEF: May 10th 2008

Dive Captains Report.

The day started promisingly enough, with all 10 divers and 3 boats turning up at Sorrento Boat ramp on time. The weather was fine and the seas calm, the forecast suggested it would stay that way.

As the 3rd boat was launched it became apparent that only 2 outboards were operational and after a fruitless 20 minutes of problem solving the decision was taken to put SS Geekie back into dry dock and re-organize the remaining 8 divers between the 2 functioning craft. Alan Storen offered to jump ship and dive Blairgowrie Pier with David Geekie, and after 13 milliseconds of deliberations we accepted his gracious offer.

Slack water was approaching and we decided to try for the Eliza Ramsden. Just as Peter Briggs and myself were about to put the shot smack in the middle of the wreck John Lawler came over the radio with the news that there was 3-4 ships coming through the heads during the slack and that we would have to move elsewhere. We quickly steamed over to the Lonsdale Wall/ Boarfish Reef area and saddled up the first 2 groups of divers.

First in were Adam Borge and Peter Briggs who had a 30 minute dive on the Wall edge in water they described as absolutely filthy and pretty cold. Further along Lloyd Borrett had 2 new buddies fresh from the UK in Rob Cowan and John Gladding. All reported very poor viz in the range of 3m max, but as usual for this area the bottom terrain and abundance of fish life more than made up for it.

As we dragged in the last of the divers from the slack water dive, the remaining three (GRRR, JL and Steve Lamb) hurtled down on a drift line into 20m of varied terrain. The bottom initially was quite sterile and devoid of any action, but as with all drift dives in this area we eventually came across several impressive reefs and ledge formations, one of which resulted in one very relieved crayfish being left behind.

Back on board lunch was served. Due to the previously mentioned dry docking of Captain Geekies vessel, the aptly named Jumpsuit Jack—who had earlier surreptitiously purloined David's stash of hot dogs, began serving a veritable sumptuous banquet to the undeserving motley crew. This was outrageous! I owned a half share in this feast as I had bought the rolls on the way down, and here was this pirate feasting on my food.

After fixing the other boat with a series of icy glares that would do a mother-in-law proud, finally the offer was made to share my hot dogs with me. Damn decent of them-eh what!

Over lunch, as we sat off Queenscliff becalmed, plans were afoot to brave the icy waters once again. Briggs, Borge and co, decided on a fish feeding frenzy at Popes Eye, whilst the others elected to do a drift off Shortlands Bluff. With that the 2 boats sped off to complete the 2nd dives and made sure everybody that wanted to, got wet a second time.

With a drizzly squall fast approaching we headed back to the ramp and retrieved the boats with the usual minimum of fuss. No after dive de-brief at the Sorrento Hotel for me. My wife had insisted I return home early as we were going to Ballarat for dinner, so I made urgent reparations to return home with all haste. One of the new divers dryly suggested that ". You know she won't be ready, don't you.." as I urgently panicked my gear into the boot of the car. I even rang her to apologise, and tell her my ETA, as I left the guys bemused at the ramp.

.Arriving home, I quickly hurled the gear in to the back yard via the side garage, I ran to the back door and gee, guess what, She wasn't ready, was she?

Now I know how Spodginton must have felt all those years ago. Grrrrrr

The before, during and after shot.....



Bike riding is for the

Mick Jeacle enjoying the thrills of bike riding?!!??!!??!!??!!??!!

Subject: Underwater Ironing Event

Some info on the "Extreme Sport of Underwater Ironing"

Extreme Underwater Ironing! What exactly is it? Originally pioneered by a group of Germans, it's the act of taking an ironing board and electric iron (minus the electricity of course) and setting it all up, somewhere interesting on the bottom of the ocean and taking the photos prove you did it. It's all a bit of harmless fun really. Of course, the better staged the shot, either with props or location, makes for a better photo. Originality is the key, and a warped sense of humour can play a big part as well and it is now well known that a bit of cross dressing has made the attempt more entertaining.

The Official Oceania Extreme Underwater Ironing record now stands at **70 ironers** and was set by a Victorian Dive club in a pool. This record attempt was set in front of officials from Guinness and is now the Official World Underwater ironing Record. According to Guinness, to claim this record, one only has to be underwater, it does not have to be at any particular depth. According to the organisers, they had more ironers willing to participate, but ran out of forms to fill in.

The call to participate

Hey Crazy Scuba Divers

A rare chance for many of us to partake in a "Guinness Book of World Records" attempt

I received this reply from the organizer of the 'Guinness Book of Records

Underwater Ironing' attempt to be held on 30th April.

Register your interest, NOW!

Deborah (Deb) Azzopardi

VSAG response

Can someone tell me what an Iron or Ironing board is?

Jim Turner

Iron is believed to be the sixth most abundant element in the universe, formed as the final act of nucleosynthesis by carbon burning in massive stars. While it makes up only about 5% of the Earth's crust, the earth's core is believed to consist largely of an iron-nickel alloy comprising 35% of the mass of the Earth as a whole. Iron is consequently the most abundant element on Earth, but only the fourth most abundant element in the Earth's crust [3] where it is the second most abundant metal after aluminium. Most of the iron in the crust is found combined with oxygen as iron oxide minerals such as hematite and magnetite.[citation needed]. About 1 in 20 meteorites consist of the unique iron-nickel minerals taenite (35-80% iron) and kamacite (90-95% iron). Although rare, meteorites are the major form of natural metallic iron on the earth's surface. The reason for Mars' red colour is thought to be an iron-oxide-rich soil.

John Mills

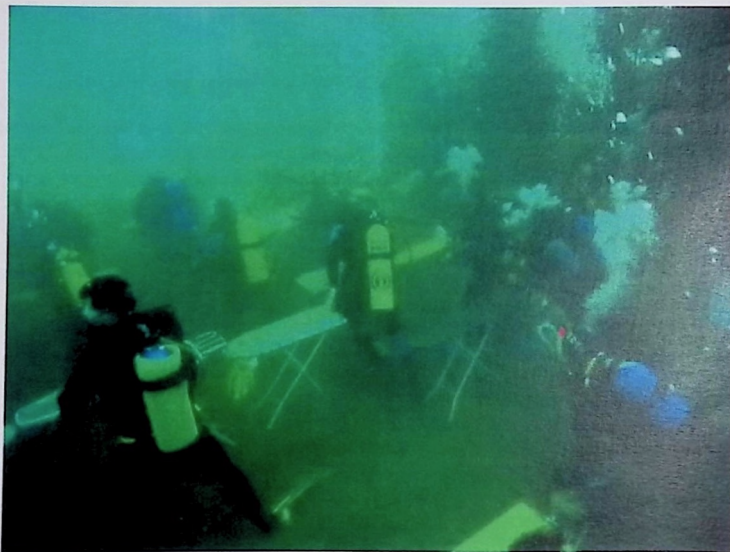
Fantastic John.

But where does the ironing board fit in, eh Jim?

Mick Jeacle

Obviously Mr Mills has nothing better to do with his time than to retype an article from some scientific manual in an effort to try and impress young Jim Turner, however he has failed to answer the second part of Jim's question about what is an ironing board. Jimmy if you don't know what an ironing board isdon't ask. It is actually a very important piece of equipment that plays a major part in a weekly ritual of secret women's business that no male should see or be part of. It can either be flat or upright and is stroked gently in a backwards and forward motion to give sensual pleasure. It is kept inside the house usually out of sight and hidden with other secret women's playthings such as mops...brooms, and something called tea towels. Ask no more for to find out further information can cause major harm to one's manliness.

John Goulding



TIME IS A GREAT HEALER, BUT IT'S A LOUSY BEAUTICIAN!

WISDOM WILL KEEP YOU FROM GETTING INTO
SITUATIONS WHERE YOU NEED IT!

St Leonards' divers set underwater ironing record

Michaela Farrington 31Mar08

A group of 72 SCUBA divers ironed their way to a Guinness World Record at St Leonards yesterday.

The divers set the record for the most people ironing underwater at the same time, narrowly pipping the previous mark of 70. Wetsuit-clad divers marched into the water with tanks on their backs and ironing boards under their arms yesterday morning, as perplexed onlookers lined the shore and the pier to watch the spectacle.

Each diver carried an iron, a board and an item of clothing to iron during the unusual underwater event. Some kicked out into the water from the shore, towing their ironing boards. Others launched themselves from the pier and then sank into the murky shallows.

It was a massive demonstration of the wacky sport of extreme underwater ironing. The youngest diver taking part was 10-year-old Janda Penny, grand-daughter of event organiser Debbie Azzopardi. Ms Azzopardi said she selected St Leonards as the staging ground for the record attempt because it was a sheltered place to dive. But while the group had the numbers, breaking the record proved a challenge when some divers struggled to sink with their surprisingly buoyant ironing boards. Keeping everyone under the water, ironing, was another challenge, with several divers bobbing to the surface just when the record looked set to be broken. Cr Tom O'Connor took the plunge to lend a hand during the event, swimming around on the surface and diving down to check on the progress beneath the waves.

Eventually all divers were submerged and at their board, irons in hand, at the same time. A local police officer officiated from the pier, ensuring all divers were down and then re-checking the numbers to confirm a record had been set.



Record won, the shivering and cheering divers surfaced and swam ashore, dragging their boards behind them.

"We've got the record, I'm so stoked," said Ms Azzopardi. "I'm so proud it's for Australia."

The event also raised \$865 for Project AWARE a non-profit underwater conservation organisation dedicated to protecting reefs and waterways.



THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

A married man should forget his mistakes.

There's no use in two people remembering the same thing



Judge to prostitute, 'So when did you realise you were raped?'

Prostitute, wiping away tears: 'When the cheque bounced.'

PUTTING THE TORCH TO THE TORCH

Always striving to experience that something different, Greg Richards came up with the idea of booking a charter boat for a night dive. The next suitable early-evening slack water just happened to be on Anzac Day, and so Tom Wendt's boat was booked and 7 VSAG members met at Portsea Pier to dive Portsea Hole on a beautifully calm night.



In recent years my night diving has been restricted to pier and shore dives and the occasional trip out to Pope's Eye with Alan & Mary, so I was really looking forward to this dive. But, night diving from a boat in open water makes it even more important to have a good torch in working condition. Under a pier it's not really so much of a tragedy if your torch fails because there'll still be enough ambience from the pier's lights to figure out your way home. And under a pier you also don't have to worry so much about some drunken yuppie yahoo powering a cruiser towards your head at 40 knots.

In the entire history of the evolution of SCUBA equipment, the submersible torch is yet to show any real technological design improvement. From the high-tech (for the time) AquaFlashFlood of the mid 70's to the high tech AlphaFlood2000 of the 2000's I've flooded them all.

The fundamental weakness of diving torch design is the "O" ring. Unless you are able to assemble your torch in a sterile and hermetically sealed environment you have no guarantee of inserting a clean "O" ring. If you get the slightest speck of dust or sand on that "O" ring, water will just piss in. The slightest crack or blemish where the "O" ring sits, or on the lens assembly that you screw onto the bastard, and the mongrel's going to flood. I've even flooded torches because I used too much silicone grease, allowing the "O" ring to slip out of position! And it doesn't matter if you have a toggle switch, or a rocker switch, or a push-button switch or one of those stupid twist-the-whole-front-of-the-torch-and-hope-for-the-best switches the bitter truth is that it's been purposely designed to let water through fairly early in its design life.

Ikelite were the first equipment manufacturer to acknowledge this problem, and they made their torches out of clear plastic so that you could at least have the satisfaction of watching the water piss in. It really was fascinating to study the chemical processes as salt water made that expensive black Eveready 9 volt brick ooze out electrolyte paste. This brown sludge would react with the salt water to instantly corrode the wires in the switch thus rendering it useless no matter how quickly you can get back to the boat, rinse the thing in fresh water and

blast a can of WD40 at it. And even if you did manage to save the wiring, the reflective paint on the reflector - the shiny stuff that actually makes the torch shine - would transform into a dull matt grey non-reflective powder.

It is for this exact reason that people started diving in the caves at Mt Gambier. Even though it meant buying and flooding more torches it was fresh water, so at least there was half a fighting chance of resurrecting them.

Sealed beam torches or "lanterns" such as the ubiquitous OceanFlood Pro were the next development. The OceanFlood Pro had a double "O" ring seal, thus doubling the chance of a flood which in turn doubled the sales and maintained the viability of the recreational dive industry throughout the 1980's recession. Heavy and cumbersome, the sealed beam was an inspired design which provided divers of all ages with another fascinating demonstration of



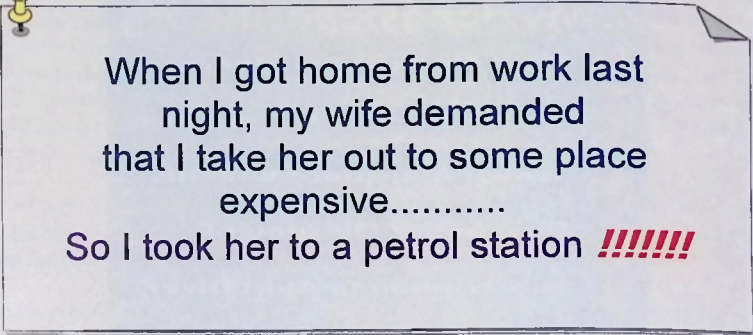
practical physics - the implosion! In the process of gearing up for your dive you'd only have to use the torch for half a minute to heat the sealed beam glass enough so that it would crack the second you hit the water. This created a structural weakness that was not apparent until you arrived at depth. The sharp "c-r-a-a-ack!" immediately followed by a subtle tinkling sound would signal the need for yet another trip to the Bank to fill out yet another "Application for Credit Increase" form.

So, when Greg announced that there shall be a minimum requirement of two and a half torches per buddy pair I wondered which of my half torches I would retrieve from storage. My yellow and black C8 needed new batteries, but I couldn't open it because it had suffered from yet another inherent design fault in which the designers have cunningly used Boyle's Law to great effect. The ol' tightening the lens at depth trick! As a diver descends, torch in hand, the surrounding water pressure compresses the "O" ring. The diver's own movement through the water creates a hydrostatic flow which exerts pressure on the lens assembly, allowing it to twist further around on the thread, thereby tightening it. The hapless diver then ascends whereupon the "O" ring expands and locks that lens assembly on like a sonofabitch. Sticking the lens end into a bench vise and whacking the torch with a hammer is about the only way to get the thing open.

You guessed it..... Still, at least the thing kept glowing a little, even if the light did have a brownish hue to it.

Diving at night is a wonderful experience. I like to swim away from the group and admire the lovely electric blue light of everyone else's torches, those lucky people who can afford to buy new torches for every night dive, or who have hermetically sealed sterile environments to load batteries in. I also like to watch the bio-luminescence sparkling as my bubbles rise to the surface. Who needs a torch anyway?

Rob Kirk



When I got home from work last night, my wife demanded that I take her out to some place expensive.....

So I took her to a petrol station **!!!!!!!**

Here is a safety tip.....

I read about the SOLAS/DSMB Stickers available from DiveSigns (www.divesigns.com) in the January 2008 edition of BSAC DIVE magazine. These stickers use Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) grade reflective tape, which is US Coast Guard approved and used worldwide for the marking of marine safety equipment.

The sticker fixes directly to the side of the DSMB. The lettering is 65 mm tall. The text on the stickers can be printed horizontally or vertically. I chose the vertical option.

I figured this has got to be an effective way to identify yourself to your surface cover/dive boat skipper during your ascent and deco, or on any dive requiring a surface marker buoy, especially at busy dive sites.

Best Regards,

Lloyd Borrett



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VSAG: Portsea Hole Night Dive Anzac Day 08.

Friday 25th April 2008 started as a somber affair with many rising early for the traditional Anzac Day dawn service amidst an overcast sky and a forecast of late rain with an afternoon change. The boating weather forecast suggested that the only day worth diving would be Friday with a deteriorating weather pattern leading to storms, rain and even hail over the weekend.

As I watched the weather unfold during the day my thoughts were beginning to wander to matters other than diving. I looked out the window often and noticed the local tall gum trees swaying like a drunken hookers hips and I assumed the bay to be a maelstrom. Around 2.00pm I checked all available internet bay cams and even a website devoted to wind speed and directions for Port Phillip Bay. I was startled to find out that the Bay was smooth and the back beaches even better! No wonder John Lawler and his crew were out making merry on the back beaches. It looked perfect.

At 3.00pm a sad sounding Mick Kakafikas rang hoping the dive was off- "no dice" I told him: " looks perfect. " He glumly accepted my verdict and said he would go find his gear and head off to Portsea Pier.

As I headed own towards Portsea the Bay was shimmering in the afternoon light When I arrived most of the crew were gearing up except Mick who was standing in the main street of Portsea fully kitted up and looking almost enthusiastic. A quick head count revealed that 6 out of 7 in attendance and then like a magicians rabbit, Rob Kirk appeared out of a cloud of dust and we were ready.

In keeping with the Anzac nature of the dive we had a few Kiwis in our midst, just to make up the numbers mind you! Our skipper, Tom Wendt, was our token German and we couldn't find any Turkish VSAGers so we let Mick the Greek add a bit of Mediterranean influence, even though after the night before I think his real name is Johnny Walker.

The plan was to try and dive the Eliza Ramsden if shipping was light, or the Hole if too many ships made the Ramsden unworkable. Tom informed us that the tug that is involved with the dredging would be in the vicinity, so the plan was set for the Portsea Hole.

We departed the pier at 6.20 and arrived at our destination at 6.22pm. We located

the buoy on the hole and as darkness fell we promptly lost it again. We then re-found it twice before losing it in the dark a third time and finally as slack water approached we decided to tie off cylumes top and bottom for reference points.

The dive brief was succinct and to the point. Go down the line, head due north (use your compass if needed) find the wall, swim along it and then come back alive.

With that in mind we sent Emma and Greg Breese in first as they had a compass and as they were Kiwis, they were considered expendable. We then sent in the medical corp as back up, in the form of Pam and David, and somewhere in all that Mick splashed in and joined in the fray.

Finally the Commanding officer and his adjutant slipped elegantly into the black cold water and after tying off the 2 cylumes they set off to find the wall. It turns out that the anchor was smack on the eastern end of the wall and it only took Greg Breese 2 minutes to stop Emma from following the compass to find what she was already on. I did say they were Kiwis!!

Hard to say what the visibility was that night, but we could see each other's torch beams quite some distance away. Possibly in excess of 10-12 metres. The dive was quite pretty with many sleeping fish, including Magpie Morwong, Wobbegongs and a few cuttlefish. Most of the still awake fish were swimming upside down as I guess there is no top or bottom to them at night or maybe they'd been on the scotch the night before too!

Seeing the main group up ahead reminded me of a spooky space ship with beams heading off in all directions. David and Pam swam directly over my head as they returned to the anchor and I only saw them as I just happened to look up, and it was like watching the mother ship from Independence Day pass overhead.

Kirky was the only one who flooded a torch on the evening (I taught him well!) although it still lasted the dive. I could hear him laughing when he realized it was leaking and I think I understood the muffled grunts he was making that indicated the torch was ... " S%^&inguselesspieceofcrap..." or something to that effect.

After completing our deco en masse we surfaced and the skipper picked us up and without further ado we were back on the pier and trudging back to our

cars. After departing we ordered pizzas on the run for my place at Frankston and 6 of us had a cleansing beer/ champers/ coke with our pizzas whilst reliving the dive and comparing notes. Sadly Mick had prior arrangements that involved Blondes, beer, scotch, a spit roast, Greek Easter celebrations and more beer, so he didn't join us. His loss.

The rest of us relaxed whilst plans were set afoot to organize another night dive, and hopefully actually dive the Ramsden. Kirky pondered the possibility that the crew at Jervis Bay after three nights together may well be trying to kill each other by now. We all nodded sagely and continued to feel all warm and fuzzy.

Footnote: Μιχαήλ εισαι και ο πρωτος και θελω να σου μοιασω και να γινω σαν εσενα... και ο πρωτος μετα απο εσενα.

Greg Richards

HOW TO CALL THE POLICE

HOW TO CALL THE POLICE WHEN YOU'RE *OLD* AND DON'T MOVE FAST ANYMORE.

George Phillips of Gold Coast, Australia was going up to bed when his wife told him that he'd left the light on in the garden shed, which she could see from the bedroom window. (Boy does this sound familiar!)

George opened the back door to go turn off the light but saw that there were people in the shed stealing things.

He phoned the police, who asked 'Is someone in your house?' and he said 'no'.

Then they said that all patrols were busy, and that he should simply lock his door and an officer would be along when available. George said, 'Okay,' hung up, counted to 30, and phoned the police again.

'Hello, I just called you a few seconds ago because there were people stealing things from my shed. Well, you don't have to worry about them now because I've just shot them.' Then he hung up.

Within five minutes three police cars, an Armed Response Unit, and an ambulance showed up at the Phillips' residence and caught the burglars red-handed.

One of the Policemen said to George: 'I thought you said that you'd shot them!' George said, 'I thought you said there was nobody available!'

(True Story) I LOVE IT - **Don't mess with old people!!**

Phillip Island

Mick Kakafikas, Greg Richards and I had agreed the West North West predication after the last BOM forecast Friday 11th was sound and the dive at Phillip Island was confirmed... but the predication was well of course.

After the easy low water launch from Newhaven, with new VSAG member Adam Borge on board, the trip to the Cape was soft and pleasant... until we rounded the eastern point that is... the wind was coming in straight from the SOUTH and the swells were right up... so much for the Pinnacles and the George Kermodé!

Rob Timmers from Seal Diving was anchored right up against the southern wall inside the large bay on the eastern side of the island.

Greg and Adam got the first dive and whilst we waited for them to surface at the agreed location, they actually surfaced well back and it took some time before we sighted them. As buoy lines were not in use it was Greg's SMB that indicated they had surfaced.

Vis was mixed, plenty of abalone, not taken on this non designated take day and no crays, yet a very pleasant dive for these two lads.

Mick and I devised our plan and with the buoy line set we dropped into good territory with some excellent bommies... moving out into deeper water the viz dropped caused by the ebbing tide but in closer to the island it improved to about 5 metres.

Plenty of abalone everywhere and only two very small crays were seen... found a very large anchor well and truly wedged into some rocks. Mick the muscle man wiggled it almost free just for fun... next I looked into gloom to a school of around 20 large fish (?) were hovering around a bommie... brilliant site... tried to excite them with food but they were too wary.

The boat was right next to us on our surface after a 3 minute deco stop and a quick entry back on board as we were a bit close to the shore line.

Lunch around the corner under anchor in the peaceful bay near to Bird rock and after the usual banter and dive stories we had a chat with another load of divers who had just dived around Bird rock.

The next dive was to the eastern point of the cape and I stayed on as boat driver and the others were dropped in. Greg was up in a very short dive as the swell was not for him. Mick and Adam hung in and we collected them twenty minutes later.

As these three divers wanted to finish the last of their air, a tow to bird rock was done and the three divers finished the day completing a full dive around this rock formation. Boat pulled out we listened to Rob Timmers tell us he went to an area near San Remo and was well rewarded for the dive.

A cold beer at the San Remo pub finished off a great sunny dive day... and great dive company

JL

Further report

Phillip Island is always an interesting place to dive and Sat 12th April was no exception. A mixed weather report and with 2 of our boat owners in hospital made for an interesting logistical exercise for our Dive Captain Mick K. Undeterred he assembled a crack team of hardened commandos and set down 9.30 am as the start time from Newhaven.

As the dive crew rounded Cape Woolamai with the intention of diving the Pinnacles it was soon apparent that the afternoon south-westerley wind change had come a few hours early. The seas were sloppy and uncomfortable and the decision was quickly made to dive the front of Cape Woolamai itself.

With a backdrop of the magnificent towering columns of granite and the sounder showing good territory underneath the divers, the 1st team entered the water. The terrain was awesome with massive boulders and swim throughs. Some of the biggest blacklip abalone seen for many a day were seen, but alas, it was a "no take day". The fish life was pretty good and some crays were seen, but proved too elusive. One sand patch in between the massive boulders had 10 Port Jackson sharks resting in an area no bigger than a large car. Very impressive.

The 2nd dive was conducted on the more sheltered Eastern side of Cape Woolamai and after the divers surfaced from the dive they requested to be towed to the 3rd dive spot at Bird Rock (Gull Island). They seemed to enjoy the experience - of being towed 500m to the next dive spot, whilst the rest of the crew (i.e./ wimps) considered it more like torture and looked on bemused.

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Although only shallow, Bird Rock has sponge life and yellow Zooanthids that one would normally associate with much deeper dive spots and the final dive was very relaxing and enjoyable.

The crack precision team of VSAG commando's then headed to the boat ramp and enjoyed a relaxed de-brief at the San Remo De-briefing centre (AKA the Pub).

Posted by Shadow

Two Clubs

24th-27th April 2008

Anzac weekend turned out to be fantastic. Weather was very good for all three days and the company was great.

Dive organisation efficient and thorough as expected and only surpassed by the food. Get Under Dive club never had it so good. Jervis bay is a great spot with such good options within a picture two kilometres of cliff edging. Well done Ocean Trek (Ron Clift.)

What could be better – great diving, great crew, great company. The VSAG club combined with Getunder to enjoy a fantastic long weekend (although it was not long enough!!) and the crew of Ocean Trek had only one fault – they feed us too much good food. I think it was mandatory to overeat and what else could one do when the food was superb. Thanks and keep blowing bubbles. (Alan Storen)

I agree with all that we said previously from my fellow club members, however I would like to add that one of the best sea tulip beds can be found on most dives in this area, bring your cameras and enthusiasm and get wet... thank you to all the crew for making a great weekend of it. Regards. (Mark Green)

Once again, Lyn, Mick and crew have done it! Baby PJ's, big wobbies, and beds of colourful tulips couldn't top the experience on board Ocean Trek! Great food, crew dedicated to provide the best diver experience, great food, excellent music, great food, and the episodes of Sea Hunt have re-invented the way we dive! This is just about the ideal club weekend, and is a highlight on Getunder and VSAG's calendar! (Alan Beckhurst!)

Thanks to the great crew of Ocean Trek, Great friendly staff, excellent and plentiful grub and great diving. What more could you want on a long weekend. (Ian Fox)

Sleep, dive, eat, all that was done over the weekend but exactly what the doctor ordered! The only thing I would have changed was the soundtrack, but then again its always good to get back to your psycadelic 80's roots, which





Lloyd seemed to rock along to with his capital "G" Golden hi-pant speedos. Cheers for the diving and the constant flow of food. Cheers (AJ Storen)

When Alan Beckhurst first raised the idea of an Ocean Trek liveaboard at a VSAG meeting night at Bells Hotel, I signed on with my dive buddy Kathy with gusto. Didn't really think about it to much till we had to put a deposit down... Mmmm! I get chronic sea sickness at the slightest boat movement... Eiiik! But with plentiful drugs and good food I managed a very enjoyable weekend. The crew were great

and made it all easy. Oh yeah Lloyd you don't blend in with the underwater environment in those gold hi speedos and bright yellow large wettie! (Jackie Storen)

Lots of fish, nudibranchs -fluro yellow, fluro purple highlights, & many more. Saw wobbies and octopus & eels and flower beds and port jackson sharks too (babies- they were so cute) wow so much to see. Brilliant diving. Ate so well. Dived some wonderful dives. Mixed with a great bunch of people & staff were so hospitable. What more can I say. Try it - I am sure you will enjoy your time. (Kathy Pedlow)

Enjoyed the three days immensely. I found the Ocean Trek crew to be organised and friendly. It was the little extra things that were done that made the Ocean Trek superior to the other live aboards that I have experienced. The scuba diving was enjoyable and varied. (Benita).



Tales of livin' aboard

When my dive buddy and I attended a Bells Thursday VSAG meeting many moons ago and heard mention of the opportunity of a reasonably priced liveaboard from Alan Beckhurst, we placed our names on the top of the list (after Alan and Mary of course).

The list grew very quickly, our names were shortly followed by my dive addicted father, Alan Storen and brother AJ, Big Fella Lloyd and forever smiling Benita, Darren Pearce, Tom Hill and son James, Trevor Williams and seven from Getunder to total 17 divers.

My stringent selection criteria for holidays – being 5 star, sunshine, hot weather, minimal energy expenditure, 98% of time spent lazing on a pool recliner, attentive cocktail waitress, plenty of reading was compromisedeiiik how did the liveaboard get thru as a holiday prospect....ok it didn't...it got thru on a technicality – it's called a long weekend away.

My freak out only started the weekend prior to the long weekend. Kathy and I had brunch on the Sunday and discussed in depth that we had chosen a liveaboard but suffer seriously from sea sickness. How conflicting. We gulped down our half finished sauv blanc's and headed off in search of seasickness solutions. At the local chemist we stocked up on any drugs referenced or hinting as a potential sea sickness remedy. Drug of choice Avamarine, plus sea bands providing acupuncture around the wrists (despite Mythbusters advised it's a myth).

The adventure

3 nights aboard Ocean Trek, a catamaran style vessel, 18m in length, sleeps 23, providing 3 sit down meals a day plus morning and arvo tea served on the deck after each dive (hot homemade sausage rolls, cake, muffins after diving mmm delish). The caring cook even hand delivered a cuppa as per your specification after each dive. Nice one. The crew consisted of Captain Mick Saliwon and wife Lyn Cleary, 2 tank fill/deck hands and a cook big on personality (affectionately known as 'Teabag').

Destination

Jervis Bay is 200km south of Sydney but a bloody long drive from Melbourne (approx 10.5 hours) and countless km's. It was tedious.

After a quick meal at the Jervis Bay RSL on arrival, we assembled a massive pile of gear on Huskisson pier at 9pm as arranged, only to find no Ocean Trek to board and rain coming down thick and fast. A small tender finally arrived once Alan called.

Lets just say, boarding Ocean Trek tank by tank, dive box by dive box into a heavy laden tender was not exactly how I pictured it.

Once on board, the rocking started. As we signed our waiver form, I turned to Kathy and started to go green. Who's idea was this ?

We moved into a calmer spot to sleep, thankfully.



Ground hog day

The boat was run like clockwork of a Navy schedule (below) :-

8.00am Arise to the smells of cooked breakfast (pancakes, egg & bacon, French toast)

9.15am – Dive 1

11.00am – Dive 2

12.00 – Lunch (

1.00 – 3.00 Nap time

3.30pm – Dive 3

5.30pm – Night Dive

Dinner & Drinks (Dinner was 3 course soup, main, dessert)

Being a person who likes routine, I started to really enjoy the schedule after Day 1.

So Friday and Saturday ran like this and Sunday was the same but we concluded after Dive 2 and Lunch.

The food was really tasty and well done given the size of the kitchen. As all divers are aware you really need a big pig out feast after diving and Ocean Trek got 5 stars for delivering.

Some divers, who shall remain nameless were looking decidedly larger in their suits by Day 3. Oh yeah and Kathy knawing on the roast bone was well... very primal.



The diving

The surrounding waters of Jervis Bay are a marine park. Our dives were certainly a mix of reefs, drop offs, swim thrus, big boulders, flat grassy weed areas.

There were sightings of plenty of weedy sea dragons (which are more orange in colour than in Melbourne), blue devil fish under ledgers, large blue groupers, miniature Port Jackson sharks (pictured below), many rays and many varieties of nudibranchs. Oh yeah, and Kathy sighted a mysterious located golfball.

However the red Indian fish remained elusive. Mary had her camera poised and endured pain and suffering of a night dive I don't think she was really keen for ...Red Indian fish obviously not posers like AJ, Benita and myself.

I would say Melbourne topography rates better.

The VSAG/ Getunder liveaboard adventure will probably become an annual plight for VSAG 'rs and I will glowingly recommend it to those keen to experience a liveaboard and/or those keen for a weekend of barely lifting a finger.....not even for a cuppa.



Marine Pests

Introduced marine pests usually don't look terrifying or lethal, but even the most beautiful sea grass or the most colourful seastar can wreak havoc in an environment where it does not belong – predating, poisoning or competing with native plants and animals.

Pest invasions can cripple economies, destroy fishing industries, deplete fish or plant populations or simply threaten our natural marine environments. Everyone who uses the marine environment has a role to play in stopping the spread of marine pests. Something simple like a fishing rod, a wetsuit or a bucket can be carrying introduced species – weeds, tiny plant spores or animal eggs. It is very important that anything that has been in the water is not moved to another area without first being cleaned.

What is a marine pest?

Any species of marine plant or animal that lives outside its natural range and negatively impacts on the new area.

Pests in Victoria

Port Phillip Bay has at least 99 introduced species. The most well known are the northern Pacific seastar and Japanese kelp.

The rest of the Victorian coast has very few pests. A few pest eggs, plant spores or a small piece of weed is enough to start a new pest population in an area outside the Bay. It is crucial all boats and gear are well cleaned before and after every use.

How are they spread?

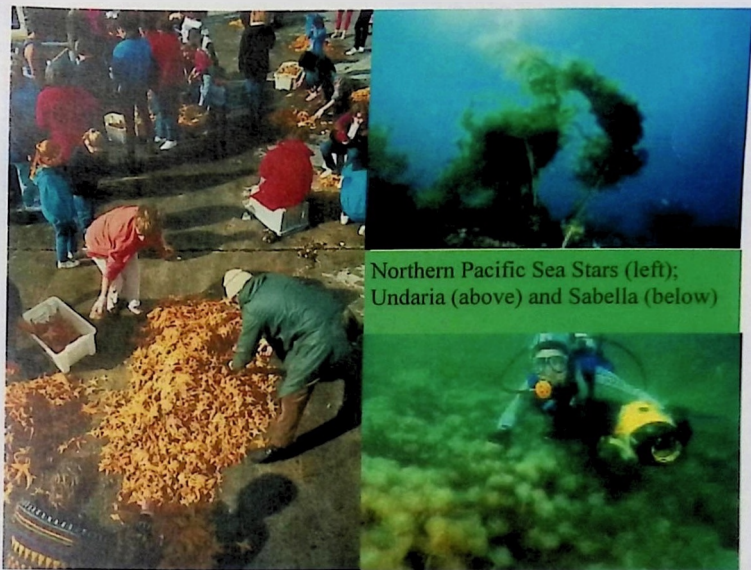
Pests can be spread by any vessel, or any gear that has been in contact with the water.

If a boat has been in infested waters like Port Phillip Bay, interstate or overseas, there could be pests on board:

- Stuck to the hull
- In any damp area
- Tangled in fishing lines, nets, ropes or gear
- In the burley bucket or on the anchor
- Stuck in the trailer
- Or in the ballast of a ship

Everything needs to be thoroughly cleaned before it is moved to a new area.

Pests in Port Phillip



International Pest Problems

Zebra Mussel: The zebra mussel was carried into the Great Lakes, USA by a cargo ship in the 80's. It quickly spread through the great lakes and all of Eastern United States. It was spread by recreational anglers and boaters – often the mussels were stuck to weeds caught in fishing gear and trailers and then moved to another waterway. The mussel costs the US around \$1 billion every year in antifouling, clean up and remedial engineering.

Comb Jelly: The comb jelly was introduced into the Black Sea in the late 80's possibly by a ship. The jelly bred very quickly. The Black Sea had few fish large enough to eat it and the jelly's ate fish eggs and plankton. Fish could not take a hold and the comb jelly became the dominant species. At its peak it made up 95% of the biomass in the Black Sea. The jelly has been blamed for the collapse of the Black Sea fisheries estimated to be worth \$250 million a year. The comb jelly is on Australia's pest watch list – we are at risk of being invaded by this jelly.

SAFETY ARTICLE

ALWAYS HAVE YOUR TANKS TESTED OR.....



These are true photos and reinforce the need to have tanks tested.

The top right photo is a reminder to always secure your tank(s) and any other heavy gear when driving! Top left is the result of a tank exploding—story does not say if the driver was in the car at the time. Middle left is the boat after being lifted from the water—tank exploded in the hold! Injuries occurred!.

For full stories see

www.scubaengineer.com/tank_servicing.htm

Dive Report Sunday 6th April

Alan Storen

The dive crew was:

John Lawler, Lloyd Borrett and Benita McDonough on JL's boat and Mick Jeacle, Alan Storen, AJ Storen and Sophie on Mick's boat.

The weather was fantastic above the water with almost flat seas and clear sky and the dive was to be the J4 and Castle rock. A quick check of the water on the way out to the Heads indicated a lot of muck in the water, probably as a result of the storms during the week!

We quickly gave away the idea of the J4 and headed for one of the deeper subs. On arrival Alan Beckhurst and two other Getunder boats were on the scene and the report was clear water to 30m and then viz of about 1m below that.

We headed for the Coogee and dropped the shot. Four divers descended – Alan, AJ, Lloyd and Benita. AJ and I did a once around the wreck but the viz was not much better then a couple of metres and sometimes less. I was glad that AJ and I had torches as it made the dive much safer – I could at least see where he was. We saw the usual bits of the wreck and fish life and returned to the surface. JL was hoping the next dive would be at the Sorrento pub as Alan Beckhurst had already pulled the pin and gone home(read – to the pub!). Mick talked JL into diving and they dropped in. About 1 minute later JL surfaced – he had lost Mick just after they reached the bottom, and Mick surfaced about 3 minutes later. Viz had not improved!!!

Modesty prevents me from listing their comments. Both Mick and John got changed and decided a second dive was not on the agenda.

We had lunch at Point Nepean and due to a much up with slack water timing we changed our second dive from the Eliza Ramsden to Pope's Eye. AJ, Sophie and I dropped in as did Lloyd and Benita. I (we) had a very good dive, viz was ok and the current not too strong. JL and Mick did not change into their wetsuits for a second dive!

We all went to the Sorrento for a debrief and headed home soon after, some via the scuba doctor for an air fill.

A great day above the water and for some a good day under the water.

Alan

Alan



Getunder / VSAG Ocean Trek trip, ANZAC Long weekend 2008

*VSAG: Alan Storen, Jackie Storen, AJ Storen,
Darren Pearce, Kathy Pedlow, Lloyd Borrett,
Benita McDonohue Tom Hill, James Hill, Trevor
Williams.*



Getunder: Ron Clift, Mark Green, Adrian Klopp, Tony Quinn, Ian Fox, Alan Beckhurst, and Mary Malloy.

As the minimum number of divers for a booking on Ocean Trek is ten, we needed to invite VSAG to consolidate the booking, and we ended up with 7 Getunderers and 10 VSAGers. The 9 ½ hour drive is a chore, and we had to ferry all our gear out to the moored OceanTrek at 9.00pm on a rainy Thursday night, but from there on the trip was a delight. As is the norm, we motored Ocean Trek to a calm anchorage for the evening, and sat down for a chin wag til the generator was switched off at midnight.

At 8.00 am Friday the music alerted us that brekky was ready, and while we scoffed the cereals, muffins, bacon and eggs, Lyn gave us the run down for the diving over the weekend. Due to large swells we would be restricted to dives inside Jervis Bay, starting with Warrens Reef.

This was our check out dive to impress the crew, so Ron left his weight belt behind, struggled around, and finally aborted. One point for the Wally Award. The rest of us cruised around the low reef and sand observing weedy seadragons, and wobbies. With just over an hour surface interval to sample some divine chocolate and caramel mud cake and we were back in the water at Nursery Steps. More wobbies in the rocky reef, plus local fish species including the ever hungry Blue Groper. A big school of trevally flowed overhead, as a properly weighted Ron cruised below. The other momentous occasion was the salt water inauguration of Tony's rebreather!

Mick had the BBQ going as we came back aboard, but we had time to get our gear off and dry ourselves with the warm post dive towels provided, before sitting down to a very tasty lunch. The subdued tone of the morning had been replaced by the drone of chatter around the tables, and I was glad to see the mixing of club members. Tony of course, had to rush his lunch to tinker with his rebreather.

With the ocean swells still affecting the entrance, our afternoon dive was at Murrays Sandline, to hunt for baby Port Jackson Sharks! Mary had found a better buddy in Benita, which left me diving with Ron, so we followed the weedy slope to a flat sandy

bottom with skate, flathead, banjos and sea pens dotted about. I noticed some old survey stakes enveloped in Queen Anne scallops, and then saw half a dozen baby PJ's around the base. Then we found many more around and between other stakes. Finding the boat was made easier by the noise of the generator, and as we approached I saw a cloud of small chinaman leatherjackets attracted by Mary stirring up the bottom.

Some got in a little sleep before the pre dinner twilight dive, also at Murray's Sandline. Same animals as the day dive, plus a beautiful little butterfly gurnard, and squid hunting in the light pool at the back of the boat. Amazingly, after Tony had indoctrinated us all on the anti tiredness affects of nitrox and rebreathers, he was too tired to do the night dive! One point for the Wally!



Showered and refreshed, we sat down to another superb meal, chatter and laughs. By eleven 'o clock almost everybody had hit their bunks, so the generator shut down early.

The wind changed direction through the night, meaning we could dive the North side Saturday, and once again music alerted us that another superb brekky was served.

Our first dive was Fish Rock, and significantly better vis. Tony couldn't make the first dive as he needed to conserve his energy for the rest of the dives, so I buddied Darren. We descended on rocky reef covered in multi coloured tulips, and typical local fishlife. As we made our way to the shallows, we encountered large schools of yellow tail scad and pomfrets, an awesome sight!

Hot muffins awaited us back on deck, as we relaxed before the next dive. Flushed with the success of the last dive we had a go at the entrance site, Point Perpendicular, but the residual swells had the water stirred up. The deep bommies weren't very attractive, so we made our way up the boulder stacks, reminiscent of the Prom. There were a few nice caves and swimthrus, but the big schools and friendly Blue Groper were up in the shallows. Back on board, we learned that Tony had to abandon his dive as he hadn't closed the zip on his drysuit! By now he had a firm grip on the Wally!



Another spectacular lunch, and we were back in the water at The Docks, exploring colourful rocky reef. The feature of this site is the Double Decker Cave, but by the time I got there the dozens of divers who beat me left it a bit murky! The conditions were good enough to

stick around this site for the twilight dive!

Mary and I were on a quest to find Red Indian Fish, and stayed around the sand line (with no success) but the rest of the divers explored the shallower reef for sleeping fish. We played with tiny goatfish and spoon worms before making our way back to the anchor where we saw a feeding ray.

The chicken curry was well appreciated, but I paid for it later. Mick put on some episodes of Sea Hunt, which were a scream for the underwater fight scenes, but reminded me of my age! Everyone seemed to be having a great time and the generator ran til after midnight.

Sunday dawned with far better conditions than forecast, and as Fish Rock had fired yesterday, it was our first dive (after a scrumptious pancake breakfast!). The anchor was in 27 metres, so we made our way up the colourful rocky slope and its usual denizens, once again to witness the flowing schools of silver trevally, and yellowtail scad.

Our last dive of the trip was at Inner Tubes. It was supposed to be a swim from there to the Docks, but we were literally arrested by the profusion of fish. Apart from the usual wobbies and blue groper, the schooling scad and pomfrets went on forever. Almost out of air when Mary called me to the biggest wobby in memory, over 3 metres, and sitting on a rock out in the open.

Packing to leave was sad, and everyone had thoroughly enjoyed the trip. We all sat for the obligatory group photos, then ferried gear back to the wharf. For most it was the start of a long drive home, but Lloyd, Benita, Kloppy, Mark, Darren, Mary, and myself headed 3 hours south to Merimbula Divers Lodge. We all arrived in time to settle in our unit, and head off to the pub for tea, except for Darren. He arrived at the pub with a cop car fully flashing behind him! With just a warning, he got to our table a couple of minutes ahead of his parma!

After air fills Monday morning, we all headed to Tathra wharf. Lloyd opted to sit it out, and was invaluable assisting divers and cameras in and out. Apart from being a little hazy, conditions under the wharf were excellent. Schooling scad cruised over rocks and junk hiding morays, octopi, scorpion fish, pike, nudis, blue groper, huge rays, and pineapple fish! Benita swam around most of the dive with a retrieved fishing rod, while Mark made an octopus angry.

We went back to Merimbula Divers lodge to shower and pack for the trip home. Everybody seemed to enjoy the trip, and suggested next time we organise it over a week. Maybe during 2010 ????

Alan Beckhurst

Tragedy at Sea

By Mackenzie Gregory.

Introduction

During the months of 1945 prior to the surrender of all German Sea, Air, and Land forces to the Allies on May the 8th, a series of disasters happened at sea.

A horrific number of deaths resulted, and five German merchant ships were involved.

They were:- Wilhelm Gustloff, General Steuben, Goya, Cap Arcona, and Thielbeck .

Three of these ships were sunk by torpedoes fired from two Russian submarines, but two were sunk through attacks by British R.A.F. aircraft. When linked together, the loss of life from the sinking of these five vessels added up to between 25,000 and 30,000.

The fate of these ships has never been widely disseminated in print, although at least two books *The Cruellest Night*, and *The Damned Don't Drown*, have been written about Wilhelm Gustloff, and one, *The Dentist of Auschwitz* contains a chapter devoted to the loss of Cap Arcona.



Cap Arcona.



A Madagascar stamp issued in 1998 depicting the torpedoing of the Wilhelm Gustloff

Several sites on the Internet are now playing their part in bringing this story to a much wider audience across the world.

One may well pose the question "Why are so many people unaware of these actions and this huge loss of life?"

I had stumbled on the story of the sinking of Wilhelm Gustloff in 1997 whilst researching my work *Under Water Warfare, the Struggle against the Submarine Menace 1939-1945*. I had not been aware of this saga prior to this discovery. Further follow up brought to light the fate of four more German Merchant ships.

In pondering answers to my own question as to "Why people are generally unaware of the fate of these five ships and the huge loss of life that stemmed from their sinking," the following points come to mind.

At the time of these losses in 1945, the war in Europe was rushing to a conclusion, and other matters claimed center stage.

It is unlikely that the Russian Submarine service released details at that time of their sinking of three of these ships.

The Russians may well have been unaware of the huge numbers of people carried by these ships or their status, and how many people died.

Given the behavior of the German Army that invaded their Motherland. Russian service people could be expected to offer little sympathy or quarter in return to either the German civilian or military population fleeing from their advancing forces.

The two ships sunk by the R.A.F. were both carrying occupants, mainly Jews, from German concentration camps, guarded by a force of about 500 SS troops.

It is doubtful that these unfortunate people had any constituency to enquire on their behalf, or to complain about their fate.

The R.A.F. would not want to broadcast that they were responsible for so many deaths of people who had been held and treated in such a barbaric fashion.

The R.A.F. were probably unaware of the make up of the human cargo aboard the ships they sank.

I suggest "Let sleeping dogs lie" may well have been the official line in Britain at the time, and it probably still obtains.

If one assumes that at least 25,000 people died, (in the sinking of these five ships) from the 2.11 million who were lifted to safety, these deaths represent but 1.9% of the total.

Whilst this percentage is not meant to diminish their tragic loss, it may help to put into perspective why so little is known about what happened to these refugees, or why there was no outrage or outcry on their behalf so long ago in 1945.

This brief description of these actions is offered in an attempt to help redress the paucity of information available on this subject.



Position of the wrecks, Goya, Wilhelm Gustloff, and Stueben.

Backdrop to evacuation of refugees.

The reason for this vast rescue operation from the German enclaves at Danzig and Königsberg, was the sudden drive on January 12th 1945 by Soviet forces rushing towards Germany and in particular towards Berlin.

The Russians had reached the Oder River, and were but 100 miles from Berlin, and in fact had overrun thousands of German refugees, both civilian and military in these areas.

A vast fleet of ships was assembled to rescue these people, and, an incredible 2,116,500 people were picked up to be transported by sea to a safe area. This rescue operation enjoyed over a 98% success rate, and of this total, about half a million were military personnel. When compared to the rescue of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk in 1940, this lift of refugees fleeing from the advancing rapacious Russian army was seven times greater.

Let us look briefly at the fate of the five ships involved, who were all sunk with a resulting appalling loss of life.

Strength through Joy programme.

Kraft durch Freude (KdF) or the Strength through Joy programme was an offshoot of the Deutsche Arbeitsfront, known as DAF or the German Labor Front.

KdF planned and provided multi activities for the workers, on the assumption that a contented labor force would be more productive on the home front.

Thus, concerts, cultural programs, trips and cruises were all organised.

Wilhelm Gustloff was the flagship of those used in the workers cruise programme. Wilhelm Gustloff.

This ship of 25,484 tons had been launched and named after her late husband by the widow of Wilhelm Gustloff who was the leader of the Nazi party of Switzerland. In 1936, he had been assassinated by David Frankfurter.

May of 1939 found Wilhelm Gustloff transporting back to Germany part of the Legion Condor who had fought with Franco's forces in the Spanish Civil War.



Wilhelm Gustloff before the outbreak of WW2 in 1939

In September of that year after war was declared by Britain, Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand against Germany for her invasion of Poland, this ship was commissioned into the Kriegsmarine as Hospital Ship D, then in November 1940, she was turned into an accommodation vessel anchored at Gotenhafen, the former port of Gdynia, and here it remained until January of 1945.

The port of Gotenhafen nestles on the western side of the Gulf of Danzig sheltered from the Baltic Sea by the probing arm of the Hel Peninsula.

Also in port were some remnants of the Kriegsmarine, Lutzow, a pocket battleship, Admiral Hipper, a heavy cruiser, some light cruisers, plus a number of destroyers. All were ready to play their role in this mass evacuation from the fast approaching Russian horde.

Further east the port of Königsberg was already under siege, here the cruiser Emden having undertaken an engine refit, was ready to make her escape, but, was suddenly ordered to wait to take on board a special cargo.

This turned out to be the remains of Field Marshal von Hindenburg and his wife. Their coffins had been snatched from the Memorial that had stood at Tannenberg, the scene of the Marshall's famous victory, and this city had now fallen to the fast advancing Russians.

Wilhelm Gustloff had an unusual command structure, her Captain as a civilian ship was a merchant marine officer, Friedrich Petersen, but as a residential vessel for the 2nd. U-Boat Training Division, she carried Commander Wilhelm Zalm, a naval officer in command.



Karl Hoffmann (picture at left), a Kriegsmarine sailor and a survivor of the sinking leaves us with this account.

"By January 22nd, the ship had made ready to receive her passengers. It was extremely cold, about 14 degrees C below zero, and with the likely arrival of Russian forces, chaos was the order of the day.

"60,000 refugees crowded into the harbour town of Gotenhafen and people stormed aboard the ship, in the mad rush to escape and gain a passage in this ship, children became separated from their parents. At the last moment, about 400 women aged from 17 to 25 who were Naval Auxiliary personnel were added to the overflowing throng on board. They were housed in the swimming pool area.

"On the 29th. of January when it was doubtful that any further numbers could be squeezed on board, a hospital train arrived, and these injured soldiers were somehow crammed into the Wilhelm Gustloff."

Hoffmann estimated a company of 7- 8,000 people were loaded, but stated that the exact number were never calculated, in fact, this estimate may well be understating the actual number of people aboard this ship.

Because of the vast excess of refugees above the normal number of passengers carried, 40% of all on board were left without any life jackets.

At 1230 (12.30 PM) on the 30th. of January 1945, four tugs eased the Wilhelm Gustloff away from her berth, at last the ship was moving, they would soon be on their way to safety. One can hear the collective sigh of relief that must have been uttered by her company.

The ship shaped a course westwards for the open sea and freedom!

The weather was bad, a wind strength of force 7 prevailed, snow was falling, and ice floes were evident in the surrounding waters, and layers of ice commenced to form on the decks of Wilhelm Gustloff.

Her only armament, two Anti Aircraft guns hastily mounted on the upper deck.

With the heavy weather, below decks became a shambles, as many of the refugees succumbed to sea sickness, the over crowding exacerbating this problem.

At 2110 (9:10 PM) three torpedoes struck the Wilhelm Gustloff fired from the Russian submarine S13 under the command of Alexander Marinesko. Panic ensued as

thousands tried to reach the deck space. The ship listed to starboard then righted herself briefly then to take on a heavy starboard list.

The first hit had been deep below the waterline and level with the bridge, the second torpedo exploded below the swimming pool area where the 400 Naval Auxiliary women had been housed and most of them died.

The third and last torpedo hit amidships in the fore part of the engine room opening up the hull and destroying machinery.

The ship was doomed, and the forecastle started to dip below the sea surface whilst the stern rose higher in the air, in only 50 minutes Wilhelm Gustloff had sunk, taking with her in the icy depths of the Baltic about 7000 children, women and men.

A flotilla of small German ships in the vicinity managed to pluck 1000 people to safety.

Hoffman was among those saved by German Torpedo Boat T-36, he reported that three rescued pregnant mothers gave birth that night aboard that Torpedo boat.

All that now remains of this proud ship is a wreck, designated as a mass grave site, making it off-limits to divers.

The mid section is badly damaged and crushed, the bow and stern appear relatively well preserved.

This wreck of Wilhelm Gustloff survives to remind us all of the single most tragic event in Maritime History, with the greatest loss of life.

It now appears that up to 10,000 could have died in that fateful night.

Thousands of unnamed people lie at rest to serve a warning to the world that War is Hell and profligate in its demands for human sacrifice.

General Steuben.

In February 1945, this 14,600 ton ship that had belonged to the Nord German Shipping Line was involved in transporting over 3,000 wounded, refugees, doctors and nurses from the Danzig area to Swinemunde.

Shortly after midnight on February 10th, Captain Alexander Marinesko in Russian Submarine S-13, lined up the second large ship in his periscope in the space of only 10 days. He was convinced he had found a cruiser of the Emden class. Using his stern tubes he fired two torpedoes, both ran truly and hit below the bridge. General Steyben started to sink.

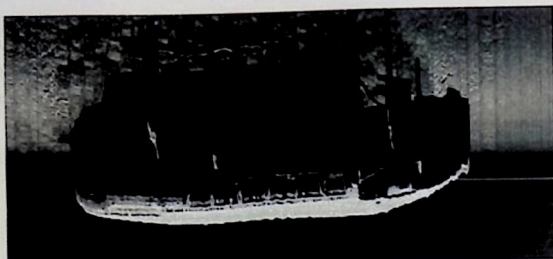
Torpedo Boat T-196 had been escort to General Steuben and quickly searched for the attacker but S13 departed the scene with dispatch and made her escape.

Within seven minutes General Steuben had rolled over and sunk, but three hundred were being rescued from the icy sea conditions, and it is believed that 3,000 died from this action.

Back to the Russian submarine S13, Marinesko had been ordered to return to his base at Turku, where he arrived on the 14th. of February.

Here, his superior officer Captain Oryel, informed him that he had sunk Wilhelm Gustloff, and that his second victim was not a cruiser of the Emden class, but another ship trying to evacuate refugees, she was General Stuben.

Along with the Wilhelm Gustloff and the Goya, the Steuben is an interesting wreck-site.



Goya.

War's Long Shadow

Sonar image from ORP Arctowski courtesy of the Hydrographic Office of the Polish Navy

A haunting sonar image made by the Polish Navy from the surface of the Baltic pulls the shroud from Steuben. Its discovery last spring 235 feet (71 meters) down, lying on its port side, has attracted serious scuba divers trained for work in deep, dark water where temperatures drop to 37° F (2° C) even in summer. The ship appears to cast an eerie shadow on the seafloor when scanned from above by sonar technology. "The wreck is quite unusual," says Henryk Nimer, a sonar officer with the Polish Navy's Hydrographic Office. "It is in a good state of preservation. Such large ships often crash into parts or get destroyed while sinking."

Goya had been built in Oslo, Norway in 1942 as a 5,230 ton freighter, and had belonged to the Hamburg America Line.

In 1943, she was conscripted by the Kriegsmarine as a target vessel serving a U-Boat training program, and late in 1944, this ship had lifted almost 20,000 refugees from East Prussia, making four voyages across the Baltic.

On April 16th, 1945, Goya was filled to bursting point with both refugees and survivors from the 35th. Tank Regiment, in all totaling about 7,000 people. The ship was steaming about 50 miles north of the Hela Peninsula and the time was four minute to midnight. The Russian submarine L3 under the command of Captain Konovalov fired two torpedoes which ran truly, hitting Goya amidships. She broke in half and was gone in about four minutes.

Some reports suggest 183 survived, and others indicate 334 were saved, but no matter which source one may use, it is estimated in excess of 6,500 died that night.

The human cargo aboard Cap Arcona and Thielbeck.

Whilst those killed in all three actions I have briefly described, were German refugees, or German armed services personnel those crammed on board Cap Arcona and Thielbeck were survivors from concentration camps at Neungamme and near Danzig, and their gaolers. Many of these inmates from these camps were Jews.

Cap Arcona and Thielbeck

The luxury liner Cap Arcona of 27,561 tons owned by Hamburg-Sudamerica Dampfschiffahrt - Gesellschaft, had been called the Queen of the South Atlantic, and she was anchored in Lubeck bay.

It is quite ironic that a Jewish immigrant in Germany had been the founder of this ship's original owner, the Hamburg -Amerika Line.

Cap Arcona's Captain Hemvick Bertram was forced by 500 German SS guards of these concentration inmates to load 4,500 of them into his vessels holds.

The smaller Thielbeck, also anchored in the bay was similarly loaded with these unfortunate people.

On May the 3rd. 1945, Royal Air Force aircraft from 83 Group 2nd. Tactical airforce attacked both ships, plus a much smaller ship, Athens which had been used to ferry the prisoners from the shore to the respective ships at anchor.

Fire from the attacking aircraft caught the prisoners trapped below decks, Cap Arcona burning furiously rolled onto her side, Thielbeck sank within forty five minutes, and something of the order of 6,000 died from both these ships.

It was reported that survivors in the water were gunned down by SS units on shore manning machine guns there.

Over the centuries many ships have foundered at sea in varying circumstances with subsequent loss of life, but nowhere in the annals of the sea has there been recorded a single calamity such as the sinking of the Wilhelm Gustloff, which has proven to be the greatest Maritime Disaster in history.

Regards.

Mac.

Mackenzie J. Gregory

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Mac's Web Log

URL: ahoy.tk-jk.net

Dive Report Saturday 5th April

David Geekie

Grrrr. Greg, Pam and David launched from Queenscliff after being thoroughly done over by the Water Police on Saturday morning. They were obviously trying everything possible to keep people from the dredger, but we had all the safety gear required.

Our primary dive was to be the slack flood tide at 2:16PM but the rip looked OK so we headed out to the Coogee. Eventually the depth sounder showed something so the buoy was dropped. The two Gregs dropped down into around 3 - 5 m visibility. Upon their return Pam and David repeated the dive. The buoy had been placed at the bow by Grrr so we headed along the wreck, running out a line as this was our first visit. Saw the boilers and made it to the stern where the fish life was abundant. With time running out we quickly returned to the buoy line and headed up. Had one almighty tangle of 60m of line as the reel had jammed!

We then headed inside the bay on the last of the incoming tide and enjoyed our hot dogs for lunch.

Grrr was aware that Tom was going to the Eliza Ramsden for slack water so we decided to join him and add the mark to our GPS. Grrr and Greg dropped in on slack and obviously enjoyed a great dive. Pam and David dropped in but with the current already turned we did a quick lap of the wreck to get a feel for it, then had a quick look inside at the middle and stern before heading up.

Overall a great day with two new sites for three of us. Thanks to Grrrr for introducing us to these sites, we will certainly return to explore them more thoroughly.

BALI 2008

Alan Storen

A group of happy travellers met at Melbourne Airport to fly to the exotic destination of Bali. All were on time; well, except for Andy who had a lunch-time function and after booking in we quickly got into holiday mode for the 6 hour flight to Denpasar. Departure time was 6.45pm.

The travellers were: Alan and Jude Storen, Peter and Carol Briggs, David Geekie and Pam Dagley, Pat Reynolds, Andy Mastrowicz, Benita McDonough and Alan Dickerson.

We were met at the Denpasar airport by our hosts Tony Medcraft and Wayan at 10.45pm (local time or 12.45am Melbourne time) who took us to a Hotel in Sanur for an overnight stop. After a great early breakfast at Alice's restaurant we were soon on our way to Tulamben Wreck Diver's Centre, about 3 hours away. Tony could not join us as he had a family commitment in Perth.

Our Tulamben accommodation was great and Jude and I had water views from the balcony. Unpacked, lunched at Wayans Restaurant across the road and we were ready for action. I must add at this stage that the name 'wayan' is reserved for the first born, male or female, and so there are many wayans as one travels around Bali. Very confusing!

We hit the water at 2.30pm for our first dive on the Liberty Wreck. The local women had collected the scuba gear from the dive shop, hoisted one or two tanks and associated gear, BC, regs, etc onto their head and carried it down to the entry point over the slippery pebble beach. Amazing!

The USAT Liberty (United States Army Transport) was a WWII ship that was run aground after being torpedoed during the war but a subsequent volcano in 1963 caused the ship to move down the slope and ended up almost parallel to the beach in depths ranging from 3 to 30metres.



It lies on its side and is a superb wreck dive as well as a great reef dive as many fish, sponges, corals and other marine animals have made it 'home'. Some penetration is possible but only for the more experienced diver. This dive we concentrated on the frog fish, leaf scorpion fish, trevally, reef fish, the many corals, the seastars, the pygmy sea horses, the nudibranches, the ... I could go on for pages! Fantastic!

Most had taken no scuba gear as it was included in the package and some adjustments needed to be made to prepare for the next dives - another weight, fewer weights, different BC, the adjustments were made. Our dive guide was Mad'e and he was just superb. Catering for our ever need, he quietly went about his business.

Jude had found the masseurs and after some negotiation the price for a one hour full body was set at 70,000 Rupia. Sounds a lot but when translated became about \$7AUS. A bargain, and what woman can give up a bargain!! I think Jude had one every day after that! Many of the others also took advantage of the rock bottom price. While Pat was having his massage,

Andy decided to panel beat his toe, to turn it at right angles to the normal and this forced him to 'need' a full body massage to set it straight!! His toe that is! He also needed to repeat this most days?



Our first evening meal was at Wayans Restaurant but they had trouble keeping up the pace as all 10 of us descended at the same time. We opted to try the Paradise Restaurant next night and the Garlic Prawns, which most tried, would have put many of the WA crays to shame. (photo page 55) They had won us over and we ate there most nights. Pam also had great difficulty with the meals as she always needed some adjustment on the menu items and this was not always translated correctly by the staff.

That said, we ate well! Jude and I missed a decent red wine and I know Pam was hanging out for a Champagne - we had to wait for our return to Australia to get our wishes fulfilled. The rest were happy to wait for BINTANG TIME which ranged from 10am to 9pm depending on the dive schedule. We continually drank the restaurant out of cold bintang - even with prior warning!

