

# FATHOMS

**AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2009**

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP



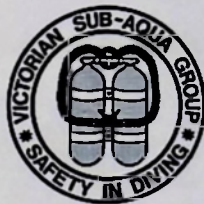
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# FATHOMS



*Official Journal of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group*

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<b>VSAG General Meetings</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday in the month	Bell's Hotel 157 Moray Street (cnr Coventry Street) South Melbourne, 8.00 pm Alan Storen	
<b>Editorial Submissions to:</b>	15 Regal Court Vermont South Vic 3133 storens@bigpond.net.au	



## Editorial

*I am told the job of the editor is not easy and I sometimes agree. My problem this month was fitting in all the articles that I was sent – I needed to add a further 4 pages and reduce the font size to fit most in. I have saved some for the next edition so do not be too concerned if your article was delayed. Many thanks to Adam Borge as he submitted the most articles this month – 4 in total. Do not let this put you off sending in an article as this is not always the case for every edition.*

*We have had some spectacular diving lately with good viz and many divers, hence many reports.*

*The Ex- Canberra looks like it is going down and it has been the case of Going, Going, Going, .....watch this space. Latest is mid September. A NOT TO BE MISSED Sinking Ball has been arranged and details are on Page 18. Book early so we can arrange a VSAG table (or two).*

*On the social scene we have just had a very successful Christmas in July function at the Graduates Restaurant in Dandenong. What a great night it was – no room in this edition to put in a full story but an event not to be missed – book early next year! I am sure all that attended had a most enjoyable night. Excellent Food, all you could eat and drink for \$29, great company. Superb.*

*Not long to go now for the AGM so if you wish to nominate for the committee please let your wishes be known. Unfortunately Bridey has resigned due to her other commitments and we are keen on finding a Social Secretary – in the mean time JL has agreed to do the job. Thanks John.*

*Bridey had arranged a Comedy night (see page 34) and this promises to be another great night if we get the numbers. There will be emails about this but book now with JL if interested. At \$15 per head for the show and a further \$15 for a meal if desired it should be another fantastic night. Bring all your friends – not restricted to VSAG!*

*We also have reports on the VSAG Sulawesi trip and since our trip Dave Reinhardt and Ken and Takae have also booked to go – we might have follow-up stories next edition!*



# VSAG Christmas Party

The date for this years Christmas party is Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> of November.

This will be a catered event with roast meat, salads, potatoes and desserts, featuring the annual VSAG raffle among some new additions to the entertainment. It will be a BYO affair at the home of one of our esteemed members.

**Put the date in your diary!**

Any suggestions or questions? Let John Lawler know as soon as possible.

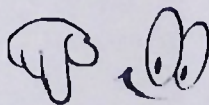
**This will be the event of the year.**

**Don't miss it!**



VSAG dive calendar is a very flexible event list. Sometimes we go on the Saturday and sometimes on the Sunday depending on the weather forecast. Do not think we are locked in to the dates/ dives indicated. If the experience of the crew is such that the location needs changing on the day then it is up to the dive captain to coordinate. On some occasions we have just gone shore diving. *Essentially, if you want to go diving, ring in!!*

*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](mailto:storens@bigpond.net.au)**

# Committee 2008 - 2009

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Committee meets 2nd Thursday of the month (except in January)

ALL MEMBERS WELCOME

Leighoah Hotel 1555 Dandenong Rd Oakleigh.



## Dive report --- Boarfish lodge June 6-8

David Politakis , Kevin Bradley, John Lawler & Adam Borge arrived boarfish lodge mid to late arvo on Friday. We had pizza for dinner , few beers / wines and settled in for the night.

Greg Richards & Benita McDonough arrived sat morning to join in for first days dive !!!

2 boats JL "Signature 1 " and Alan Beckhurst " Freediver "  
crew Freediver Alan , Marry Malloy , Kevin and Adam  
Signature 1 JL, Benita ,David & GR

1st dive of the day was the J1 sub. Max depth 36.7 metres , 22 minute bottom time 5 minute safety stop . water temp a cool 14 degrees.

Great dive very calm water conditions with no underwater surge or current. Swam around sub and did a 5 minute penetration of sub until my torch failed me and was time to swim out. Another quick look around the outside of sub until time to begin ascent.

JL lost part of his shot line when using hand reel to release line into water. A knot in the line caused hand spool to kick out of divers hand and fall into drink. When attempting to retrieve line part of the shot line snapped off dropping to the ocean floor for someone else to find another day.

Everybody very cold after first dive. Had lunch which included those very popular hot dogs did a 2 hr surface interval before starting second dive of the day.



2nd dive Lonsdale wall. This was a spot picked by Alan -one his favourites !!! - max depth 31.8 metres 25 minute bottom time 5 minute safety stop . water temp 13 degrees  
 Another excellent wall dive , good viz and decent fish life. Found some really big caves and swim thrus. The cold was the only part of dive that wasn't fun !!!!



Sat night the 9 of us went to dinner at the local pub. Few beers and wines good meal and some great conversation lead to a good night. Back to the lodge in front of warm fire till nearly 12 ish capped off a really good day.

Sunday morning began with a sleep in till 8 ish , breaky and a discussion about a possible name change for the lodge. Something more appropriate than "Boarfish Lodge " ie " Snorefish Lodge " !!!!! thank god I brought those ear plugs !!!!!

Sunday morning saw Benita & GR go home , and Mary not diving either - opting instead to go see her mum for the day. Tony Tipping & Christine Reynolds who came down sat night, joined the crew for Sundays diving .

<b>Crew</b>	Signature 1	JL, David & Adam
	Freediver	Alan, Kevin, Tony & Christine

**1st dive** Coogee: max depth 33.5 metres bottom time 20 minutes 7 minute deco/safety stop. Water temp 13 degrees

Great dive enjoyed by all with lots of fish life and bright vibrant corals / sponges on hull of wreck. Kevin & Tony managed to see a weedy sea dragon. Hot dogs for lunch again and hot soup to warm up !!!





**2nd dive** reef dive . I think the reef was between Barwon Heads and Torquay about 500 metre to 1 km off shore. max . depth 9.8 metres 44 minute bottom time . water temp 12 degrees. Great section of reef with lots of deep gutters & ledges. Surprisingly very few crays sighted. I managed to get one cray but was so small it was obviously under size so I let it go without bringing to surface. We saw some cuttlefish and I saw a couple of 1.5 to 2 metre Port Jacksons resting on the sand under a very large ledge.  
Fun reef dive to finish off great weekend !!!!!!!!!!!!!

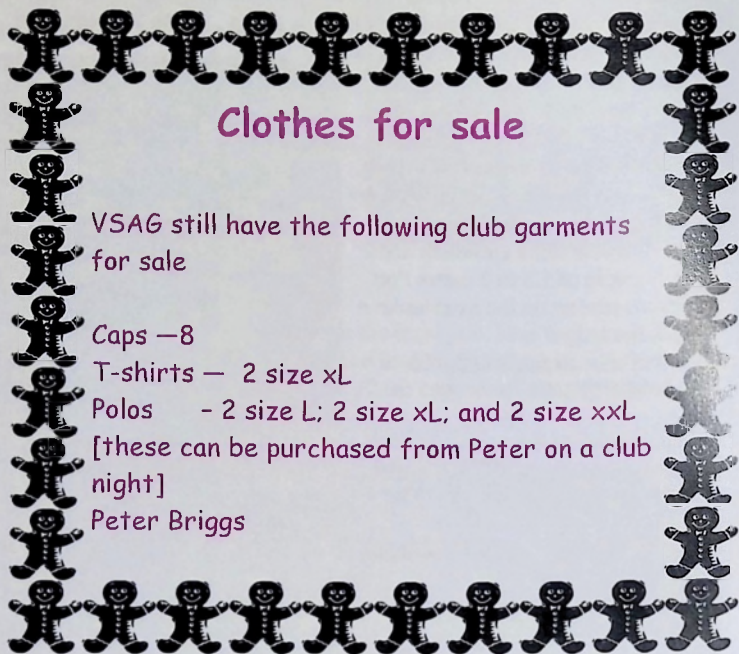


On the way back to port we spotted a whale (hump back) breaching the water several times. Both boats stopped for 10 minutes plus to observe and enjoy.

Back to the lodge to wash gear again. I had to go home but the rest of the crew stayed around for a bbq at the lodge and settle in for another night at "snorefish lodge". No diving on Monday just a bit of mr and sightseeing.

Thanks to JL, Alan Beckhurst & Mary Malloy for organising weekend Safe and great diving to all





## Clothes for sale

VSAG still have the following club garments for sale

Caps —8

T-shirts — 2 size xL

Polos - 2 size L; 2 size xL; and 2 size xxL

[these can be purchased from Peter on a club night]

Peter Briggs

## Seniors

For all of us who are seniors - for all of you who know seniors - and for all of you who will be seniors.

It pays to be able to laugh about it when you are!

And, speaking of senior moments:

"WHERE is my SUNDAY paper?" The irate customer calling the newspaper office loudly demanded, wanting to know where her Sunday edition was.

"Madam", said the newspaper employee, "today is Saturday. The Sunday paper is not delivered until tomorrow, on SUNDAY". There was quite a long pause on the other end of the phone, followed by a ray of recognition as she was heard to mutter,

"O my God! ... that's why no one was at church today".



## Dive report Adam Borge

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June

Divers Adam, Lloyd Borrett with JL driving the boat  
JL had a chest infection but kindly still donated his boat and his time for  
Lloyd and I to have a dive

We meet Rye pier at 9.30 and despite the report from the scuba docs of poor  
viz from the dredger we decided to follow our original plans and do the scallop  
dive and the South channel fort.

1st dive was for scallops about 2km from shore in approx 14 metres of water.  
Dive time 35 minutes water temp a fresh 11 degrees.

In the 35 minutes Lloyd and I collected a large bags of scallops. The main  
challenge for the dive was to get the right amt of air into the lift bag to keep  
the catch bag off the bottom so as not to stir up the sand. Lloyd had the 1st go  
at it but put a bit too much air into the bag causing it to rise too high off the  
bottom resulting in us rising a little with it. I forced the air out and put a couple  
of small amts of air from my occy into lift bag and that did the trick. Didn't  
see any fish during the dive but Lloyd spotted an old dive mask and snorkel  
in the sand which was housing a small octopus.



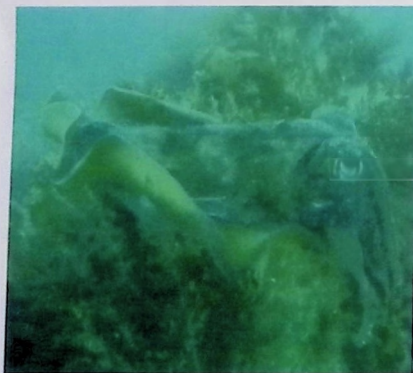
After the dive we went to the south channel fort. We moored John's boat along side the pier and went for a walk around the fort plus had our lunch



Back on the boat we went to the northern side of the fort where Lloyd and I started our dive. Max depth 12.3 metres; 43 minute dive; water temp 11 degrees.

Dive began with no current what so ever. We were able to swim between the rocks looking at the small creature like shrimp etc. after 15 minutes the current began and got harder as we approached the pier. Fish life was in abundance as was the beauty of the colours on the rocks and old timber from previous piers. We ran into a large cuttlefish just relaxing in the water.

The viz was quite good between 5 – 7 metres.



A good days diving with plenty of scallops for the freezer

Adam

## Want to earn some real good money? Try This!!

The cooks receive a base pay of just \$58,806 a year but when all the submarine and critical trades allowances are tallied up, the figure jumps to almost \$200,000.

Such is the reluctance of qualified cooks to live and work in a steel pressure tube deep under the sea, preparing three hearty "comfort" meals a day for up to 58 people, that even \$4000 a week can't attract enough starters.

Like many of the "submarine critical trades", the ranks of cooks dwindled during a mining boom that offered similar pay, a solid dose of sunshine every day and more regular family time.

The only daylight submariners see during lengthy underwater exercises is if the skipper decides the ocean's surface is calm enough and free from the "enemy" for a deck barbecue.

Submarine cooks are employed in a category known as "individuals critical to the navy" so they attract a bonus of \$50,000 a year just for turning up.

An experienced cook also gets a capability bonus of \$40,000, a seagoing allowance of \$22,254 and submarine service allowance of \$26,703.

Three cooks - one a leading seaman and two able seamen - work the subs' cramped galleys and are usually the most popular people on-board a Collins Class submarine.

During one six-month deployment on board HMAS Rankin, the cooks prepared 22,000 meals in their small, steamy galleys.

A submariner pay scale provided to the *Herald Sun* explains just why "cash" did not show up in exit surveys as a key reason for leaving the submarine service. The commanding officer of a sub at the rank of lieutenant commander with more than six years experience would earn close to \$250,000 a year after allowances.

The salaries make submariners the elites of the Australian Defence Force, paid even more than highly trained SAS soldiers operating deep behind enemy lines in Afghanistan.

The three-star Navy chief Vice-Admiral Russ Crane gets a base salary of \$242,000 a year while a navy captain with six years experience gets just \$139,000 - or \$60,000 less than the cook on a sub.



# SOUTH CHANNEL FORT

Adam Borge

Latitude: 38° 18' 23.52" S

Longitude S 144° 48' 5.28" E

The South Channel Fort is a reminder of Port Phillip Bay's early history as part of the defence lines for Melbourne. The artificial island was constructed in the 1880s to illuminate the channel at night and electronically explode mines under attacking ships coming through the Heads. A system of antiquated gun em-



placements and tunnels are a feature of the island



The picture to the right is the mount for an 8" disappearing gun

A **disappearing gun** is a type of heavy artillery, which can be retracted (or recoils after firing) into a protected housing or bunker. The gun was usually moved into the pit or protective housing by force of the shot's recoil, and was raised again by releasing energy stored in a hinged counterweight. Some also used compressed air, while a few were built to be raised by steam.

Now historical, the concept fell out of use in the first half of the 20th Century due to its complexity and limited advantages.

## Points of interest:

Island size approx 0.7ha . It was originally constructed to guard ships from entering via the southern channel of the bay from a possible invasion from Russia during the Gold rush of the 1880s. Built between 1882-87 and is the only man made island in Port Phillip Bay.

Barges ferried bluestone rocks from nearby quarries to form foundations whilst Steel and concrete was used to build an underground fortress.

-The tunnels are still intact today. The Fort was used during the 1950s-1980s for the storage of explosives for blasting rocks in The Rip.

The island forms part of the Point Nepean National Park and is listed on the Register of the National Estate for both its heritage and cultural values.

The island is a Nesting ground for many species of seabirds and is a significant site for the breeding of White faced storm petrel

Large granite boulders form caves and hiding places for a variety of marine life

Great for macro photography

water depth around island drops to approx 12 metres

New jetty built 2000

Jetty pylons provide a nursery for Old Wife fish

Bottom composition: Sea grass, rocky reef, sandy/muddy near jetty.

In 2008 early 2009 Parks Victoria completed a 10 month revegetation project on the island removing extensive thickets of Boxthorn covering a large area of the fort posing a significant hazard to the many birds who roost or breed on the island."

"After removing the Boxthorn and other weeds, the island was replanted with salt tolerant native species to ensure the Boxthorn doesn't return and help make South Channel Fort a more bird friendly habitat."



Water movement/currents: Best dived on slack water, however you can dive on an ebbing or flooding tide provided you stay on the lee side

## In The 1500's

The next time you are washing your hands and complain because the water temperature isn't just how you like it, think about how things used to be. Here are some facts about the 1500s:

*These are interesting...*

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May, and still smelled pretty good by June. However, they were starting to smell, so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odour. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

*Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, Don't throw the baby out with the Bath water..*

Houses had thatched roofs-thick straw-piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying It's raining cats and dogs.

*There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house.. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.*

The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. Hence the saying, Dirt poor. The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery in the winter when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on floor to help keep their footing. As the winter wore on, they added more thresh until, when you opened the door, it would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed in the entrance way. Hence the saying a thresh hold.

(Getting quite an education, aren't you?)

*In those old days, they cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire and added things to the pot. They ate mostly vegetables and did not get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start over the next day. Sometimes stew had food in it that had been there for quite a while. Hence the rhyme, Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old.*

Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could, bring home the bacon. They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around and chew the fat..



*Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food, causing lead poisoning death. This happened most often with tomatoes, so for the next 400 years or so, tomatoes were considered poisonous.*

*Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or the upper crust.*

*Lead cups were used to drink ale or whiskey. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days.. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink and wait and see if they would wake up. Hence the custom of holding a wake.*

England is old and small and the local folks started running out of places to bury people. So they would dig up coffins and would take the bones to a bone-house, and reuse the grave. When reopening these coffins, 1 out of 25 coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. So they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night (the graveyard shift.) to listen for the bell; thus, someone could be saved by the bell or was considered a dead ringer.

*And that's the truth.. Now, whoever said History was boring ! ! !*

## **SKILL REVIEW & FUN DIVING**

You are invited to come along and refresh your skills, try out some new gear, or gain some confidence if you haven't dived for a while. When was the last time you performed an alternate air source procedure a reg recovery, or practiced mask clearing??

Do you know how to use that surface marker buoy or practised under water signals?

These are your very basic safety skills and could get you out of a potentially serious situation underwater.

You can practise all of these skills with your fellow VSAG divers all in the comfort of a 30deg heated pool.

Where                      Monash Uni Clayton

When                        Weekend 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> August (dependant on numbers)

Time                        Approx 12 till 3.00pm

Cost                         \$10 to \$15

**CONTACT PETER BRIGGS TO BOOK IN**

# ex HMAS Canberra



Historical

## Sinking Ball

presented by  
VICTORIAN ARTIFICIAL  
REEF SOCIETY Inc

Saturday 17 October 2009

Melbourne Aquarium ~ Coral Atoll Room

7:00 pm ~ midnight

Tickets ~ \$150.00 per person  
all inclusive

Dress Ladies ~ After 5 Gents ~ Lounge / Dinner Suit

Tickets available now - email [tickets@vars.org.au](mailto:tickets@vars.org.au)

Tickets are limited so people wishing to attend this historic event should order their tickets without delay. Details on how to order tickets are available at [www.hmascanberra.com.au](http://www.hmascanberra.com.au) or via the ticket coordinator on (03) 5988-5508 (8:30am - 8:30pm).

Also available on the website are car parking and accommodation details.

Any special dietary requirements (vegetarian, coeliac, etc) will need to be conveyed to the ticket coordinator by 3 October 2009. Tables comfortably seat 10 people.

## ***SULAWESI – A medical drama in paradise***

*Well the liveboard dive trip out of Manado in North Sulawesi was a resounding success, and all who participated had a fantastic time. The water was warm, the visibility was very good on all dives, and the dive guides showed us the type of diving I requested without exception.*

*The adventure started with two nights in Singapore which helped us all to wind down and relax in readiness for our six nights on the MV Serenade. A visit to Changi Prison was a highlight, and the Thai restaurant dinner on the first night was a gastronomic experience. Singapore must be the most pristine place on earth, so much so that I don't recall even seeing a piece of paper on the streets. The arcade off Orchard Rd featuring a number of bars and eateries was a delight and many drinks were consumed there each night.*

*Alan Storen has revealed that he has written many pages on the trip for FATHOMS. so I intend to just relay my medical problem experienced on the boat, which threatened to end my diving at the halfway mark.*

*We boarded the boat on the Saturday afternoon after flying in from Singapore and completing the necessary paperwork at Murex Resort. Throughout that night we sailed north to Siau island, the northern most destination of our trip. We then started making our way back via other islands on the Sunday, and it was after the third dive that day that I felt pretty crook. I didn't think too much of it at the time as I simply chose to skip dinner and lay on the deck mattress at the front of the boat. The sight of an erupting volcano which turned on the fireworks for us certainly took my mind off it, and I awoke the next morning feeling good.*

*On the Tuesday following our last dive, the chef served up a snack, consisting of fried sweet potato cakes and fried banana pieces. I had a couple of these not thinking for a minute that these very things tipped me over the edge two days before. Within 30 minutes I felt very bilious, and had a pain in my upper abdomen that seemed to intensify by the minute. I called Alan over as he began descending the steps from the top deck, requesting that he alert our resident doctor, Pam Dagley.*

*Pam was soon on the scene and after a few questions and some prodding of my abdomen she diagnosed that I had a problem with my gall bladder. By this time everyone had arrived to see what was going on, and I was deteriorating rapidly with all energy drained and the pain becoming unbearable. Pam alerted the skipper and our lead dive guide Opo that I would need to be evacuated from the boat to receive medical attention and from what I can recall, this happened in super quick time. As luck would have it we had been diving in the Lembeh Strait that day, so it was only a short trip to the town of Bitung. The boys loaded me into the rubber duck which transported me to the Bitung jetty, where a tray utility was waiting to trans-*



port me to Manado. Llewey, Pam and Opo came along for the ride to look after the big fella, and they tell me it took more than one and a half hours to get to Manado. It was here that we visited the first clinic recommended by Dr Han Batuna, the owner and founder of Murex Resort. The boat crew had been in telephone contact with Dr Batuna, who was in Jakarta at the time, and he directed them where to go to get the best treatment. I was referred to a second clinic where an ultrasound was performed, confirming Pam's diagnosis.

One of the staff from Murex resort arrived on the scene and she did the running around to get the prescribed medicine and pain killers. On reflection, where in Melbourne could one go at 10.30pm and expect to undergo an ultrasound, without an appointment, waltz into two clinics and jump to the head of the queue in both? Not bloody likely! We were driven back to Murex where they had a room ready for me and one next door for Llewey, who undertook to listen out for "screams in the night." While all this was going on, the MV Serenade sailed all the way back to Manado and took up its usual mooring position, ready to take off the next morning for Bunaken National Park.

The medicine prescribed worked a treat and I awoke the next morning feeling almost brand new. Llewey was amazed, and he didn't have to twist my arm to convince me to jump in the shower, as we both had a boat to catch.

I elected to miss the first dive that day as I was feeling a bit lethargic, but I had every dive that followed. What an amazing turnaround; from dying one day to diving the next. Pam kept a strict eye on what I ate for the remainder of the trip, and I telephoned Annie to make me an appointment to see a surgeon as soon as possible after I returned to Melbourne. Within 4 weeks of arriving home, the offending body part was extracted, and I am happy to say I will never experience that problem again.



I am eternally grateful to all on the boat who played a part in looking after me in my hours of need. Special thanks to Pam Dagle and Llewey for coming along for the ride to ensure that I received the right treatment and medication. A big thankyou to Opo, who also came along to interpret if needed; a better guide one could not wish to meet. The total cost in AUD was just on \$100 including the car trip, ultrasound, visit to 2 clinics, painkillers and other medication. I couldn't even claim on my travel insurance as the excess was \$200! Oh, and many thanks to the staff of Murex who provided the two rooms for the night at no additional charge. Great people.

# Sulawesi 2009

## Alan Storen

*The trip started in 2008 when Mick Jeacle announced that the 2009 VSAG trip would be to Sulawesi. When I discussed this with almost everyone the question was "Where is that?"*

*I eventually carried around a small map to make the discussion easy – left of PNG and between it and Borneo, above Bali and below Malaysia. (Just look at the Map!!)*

[  
*There were many acceptances but when the starting gate was opened the travellers were:*

*Mick Jeacle, Alan Storen, Peter Briggs, Chris Llewellyn, Gerry DeVries, Nev Viapree, Gordon Brown, Anthony Finnigan, David Geekie and Pam Dagley.*

*[see front cover]*

*The trip started at the Melbourne Airport on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May at 7:30 am. - all but Gerry met to go via Singapore, Gerry had left a day earlier. The flight over was great – the flight was half full and we all ended up with more room than 1<sup>st</sup> class. The drinks kept coming as well! Well done Singapore Airlines! We arrived at 4pm local and settled in to the Grand Central Hotel. We 'hired' a bus and driver and had a quick sight-seeing trip of the city. Next we had a superb meal at a Thai restaurant and back to the hotel. A relatively quiet night - we did not want to peak too early.*

*Next day Llewey had organised a trip to the WWII Changi Prison site and we spent*



*several hours with a very good tour guide - being shown the memorabilia of the Japanese occupation. A very moving experience.*

*We also had the 'obligatory Raffles Visit' and a tour of Singapore.*



*That night some went back to the Thai restaurant again while other fried food at the local market – Mud Crabs were a hit with Llewly!*



*Next morning a 3 hour flight landed us in Manado – the capital of Sulawesi and a further 40 minute trip saw us at the Murex Resort.*



*At this stage the main negative was the many, many forms we needed to fill out – to get out of Australia, into Singapore, out of Singapore, into Indonesia, the health check forms, the quarantine forms, the list goes on. At Murex we were not spared – another few forms to fill out – dive details/experience/qualifications, medical waivers, etc, etc!!! When would we get into the water?*



*The mood changed after we had a dive brief for the trip from Opo – the Divemaster for the trip. I might add*

*that Mick had already checked the beer and wine manifest and after some top-up of supplies we were ready to go.*

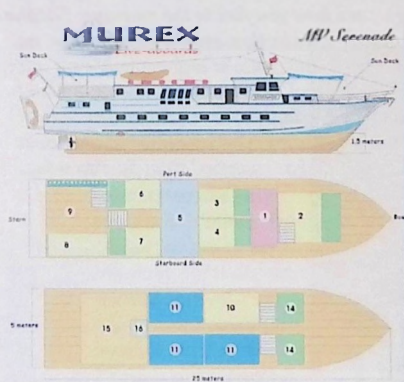
*We were soon boarded and with great weather (approx 30C – air and water) and*





flat seas we headed for our first stop – SIAU Island – an Island about 100km to the North East of the Resort. The first meal on the boat was very good, Asian style food and there was plenty of it! The accommodation was adequate and comfortable – David and Pam had the honeymoon suite and the rest of us shared twin cabins.

Another briefing – this one of the boat and introduction to the crew. Gerry had purchased caps for all members with 'appropriate' names embroidered on them. Thanks Gerry!! He also supplied stubby holders for the boat.



The underwater photographers on the trip were Llewellyn, Gerry and David and many thanks to David for the use of his photos in this report

*Some of the highlights/lowlights/funny incidents/not so funny incidents of the trip (you be the judge) were:*

- **Mick's hospital trip.** Mick was not feeling well on day two on the liveaboard – we knew this because his beer intake was well down on his normal. I think the blame went to the food but he was well enough to dive next day. That night he disappeared up to the back deck and when I caught up with him he was decidedly not well. I think his comment was "I'm stuffed!" Fortunately we had Doctor Pam on board and the diagnosis was – Off to Hospital! The next sequence of events was – a call to the owner of the resort/liveaboard; a ute was hired; a quick trip (well fast trip) over unmade roads for the most part to the capital of Sulawesi- Manado, trip took about 40 minutes; a diversion to a clinic- not the hospital; a trip to another clinic for ultrasound, etc; back to Murex resort for the night; see how you feel in the morning. **Diagnosis:** Gall Bladder problem. **Treatment:** Medication, rest, watch the diet, no alcohol. Well he did take the medication, did watch the food as it went into his mouth and forgot the 'no' in 'no alcohol'. He was back diving the next day after only missing the first dive of the day – so much for rest! PS. Now back in Melbourne Mick has had the offending bladder removed and looks fitter and slimmer than ever! I am told he has swapped from beer to wine.



- The early vsag start.** VSAG divers have a reputation on not being particularly early risers. When Opo, the divemaster suggested a 5.30am start to kit up for the first dive of the day there were many 'I do not do night dives', 'I will give this a miss', 'Wake me when you get back', 'I do not get up before the sun', 'I come good about 10am normally', 'Check if I am awake just before you leave' comments. The only draw-card was: "You might see Hammerheads". Surprise, surprise, at 5.30 all were up (I will not say awake), an early snack and dive brief, kit up at 5.45 and into the water at 5.59am. Yes, we all made it before 6am. Anyway the dive was fantastic – 3 huge hammerheads seen, one full frontal to Peter Briggs, Gerry at 60+m looking up at them – he tells me he has a photo! Made the early start well worth the effort and the buz lasted all day (at least!)

- The meals.** Rice or Noodles with that? All meals came with the mandatory rice or noodles – even breakfast. Personally I did not mind as we did have many other interesting 'Asian' dishes to accompany but it did take several days after the trip before I could face another bowl of rice. The day started with a



'snack' – toast, cake, coffee, juice before the first dive. After the first dive we had a full breakfast –eggs, etc with rice of course followed by dive two, morning snack, rest, lunch, dive three, snack, rest, dive four

for those interested – a night dive, pre-dinner drinks for those in need, dinner, party (well in the mind at least – we did have a sing along one night!), bed. The standard of meals was very good given they were prepared in a very small kitchen and the 'snacks' superb. They were also able to prepare many vegetarian meals for Pam and I did not hear any complaints.





- *Night dives.* VSAG divers are also not world renown for participating in night dives. I think when the choice is between a dive and a couple of beers before dinner the beer wins every time. Dives were on offer every night except for Mick's Hospital Trip night – you still owe us one replacement dive for that Mick! The first night dive had about 6 starters (out of the 10) but after that it dropped down to four (David, Pam, Peter and Alan), and then down to three when Peter pulled the pin. I thought the dives were great with many interesting things to see – possibly the first was only 'good' and might have put some off! Many crabs, morays out of their holes, Napoleon Wrasse hiding in their night holes (one about 2m long!), huge nudibranches and sea slugs, as well as the normal night creatures.



- *The volcano.* When it was announced that we would see a volcano on day two I was not sure what to expect. It was when we saw red hot lava being thrown out of the top of the mountain that I realised that this was something special. Lots of smoke and lava, and a local village just below! They appeared unconcerned and indicated that they were more worried if it did not 'let of steam' - that meant the pressure was building up and the eruption could be worse! At night it was even more spectacular – if not scary! Some of us went over to a 'hot pool' near the island and jumped in the water – my guess was well above 40C, could not touch the sand below the water and the rocks too hot to handle! Almost like a very hot spa bath! A lifetime experience!



- **The card sharps.** There is some debate as to who was the reigning champion at the end of the trip. Finny was sure it was him and Mick was sure that it wasn't. I know that it was not me but do not want to get into the debate. The card sharps were Mick, Finny, Gordy, Gerry, and myself. The card game 'Hearts' – no wonder I did not win – Jude was back in Melbourne! My excuse was I had never played before, and will probably never again. I think the rides changed as we went along! It was fun and helped to pass the time between dives.
- **The diving.** A picture tells a thousand words, suffice to say the diving was great and I suppose the best test is 'would you go back again'. I certainly would and highly recommend it to others. We dived on many walls, some dropping to hundreds of metres; we dived on a wreck, probably not as good as some we have locally but still very good; some excellent 'muck' dives; saw many interesting and different fish and marine creatures, corals, etc; completed 21 dives with a divetime of 21 hours. Completed 4 night dives (and Mick still owes me one!!) Had a ball! One thing that did surprise me was the shift in currents. We would jump in and be drifting



to the right, drop down the wall and then be drifting to the left for some time and then later be drifting back to the right – weird! Noticed this on a few dives.

- **Duty free.** I am not a shopper - even the thought of saving 50c on a \$100 item does not turn me into one .... but, I quickly learnt that there were some among the group that would almost verge on shopaholic. Not mentioning any names but many came back with many more kg in their luggage than when they left – didn't they Gerry! I did bring back the necessary T shirt(s) – one for me and a matching one for the grandson. That was about the extent of my purchases.
- **The wine.** Before we left Melbourne Mick assured me that he had made provision for a glass or two of red wine on board the boat to complement the evening meal. He did advise Pam to take her champagne 'duty free' when she boarded. My few bottles of red cost over two million rupiah but it did save on sleeping tablets! The wine was a South Australian shiraz/merlot and quite drinkable. About 5 times the price one would pay in Dan Murphy's. Pam rationed her champers so that it would last the nights – I think about half bottle per night was the ration. The beer was only local 'Bunaken' but I did not hear too many complaints about the quantity or quality.
- **The boat crew.** There were 10 crew and think they all had names starting with the letter 'O'. Opo, Ono, Opie, etc. They were great, very helpful when they needed to be, never in the way, and nothing too much trouble. The captain, engineer, two divemasters, cook, deckies, tank filler and cooks assistant all seemed to be competent and went about their job with minimum of fuss.
- **The divers.** All superbly fit, very experienced, well qualified and with the very best of the latest gear. I am talking about the onboard divemasters of course, then there was the VSAG group!! Most dives were conducted as a group but we did our own thing most of the time, stopping to look at the littlest nudibranch, if that was your thing, or photographing the ribbon eel, or chasing the turtle, or whatever. The norm was to have one divemaster in front and one behind and the gaggle in between – often spread over 100m. Worked well. Those that wanted to see the pygmy sea horse kept close to the DM and those that wanted to dive to 60m (read Gerry) did that.
- **The boat.** Serenade was its name and it was about a 1970's vintage in my opinion with several refurbishments over the years. It was comfortable enough and with two per cabin and enough room to 'not get in each others way'. They all had ensuite and bunk beds but I am not prepared to say who slept with whom (except David did sleep with Pam) and to apologise to Peter if I snored! We had meals in a dining area and there was room on



the front and rear deck to escape from the maddening crowd and relax. No one needed to change cabins during the cruise so I can only presume that all were happy campers. Not 5 star but adequate and comfortable.

- **The entertainment.** We did not have a huge entertainment budget so we were it. We did well with Lewy never short for a word or two as always and others contributing from time to time. There was Mick's trip to hospital, the volcano, the final night BBQ (see photos), the card games, the walkman in the ear, the afternoon 'nanna naps' the 'look at what I photographed today' sessions (except for Gerry – he had a non-digital camera and must wait for two weeks after his return), the 'what fish was that' discussions and the general over dinner table conversations. Some were even caught filling in their logbooks!!

#### **Just for the record**

[I have only included this so that others that venture to Sulawesi can see the dives we did and include or exclude from their itinerary. These are my dive log records so others will have different times/depths/ etc] Makaleki Island. 30m, 31C, 60 min, viz 30m Wall dive.

Siau Island (Eddy Point) 28m, 31C, 63 min, 30m viz. Wall dive.

Batu Lehi 22m, 31C, 67 min, 30m viz, Wall (volcano)

Behe Harbour 21m, 32C, 47min, night, sandy harbour with some reef.

Ruang Island (New Lava Flow) 32m, 29C, 57min, 30+m viz, Reef

Bomb Rock 41m, 29C, 30m viz, 59 min, Wall/Pinnacle

Sahaung Island 29m, 29C, 20m viz, 54min, Wall

Pantai Kecil 17m, 29C, night, 54 min, Wall/Reef

Batu Pendeta 31m, 27C, 20+m viz, 55min, Wall

Mawali Wreck 31m, 28C, 10m viz, 48min, wreck of trawler on side

Lembah Straights (nudi retreat) 22m, 28C, 15m viz, 62min, reef

Cancelled night dive due to Mick's Gall Bladder (he owes me one!)

Bunaken National Park (all dive below)

Lekean II 32m, 28C, 30m viz, 57min, Wall

Pangulingon 28m, 28C, 25m viz, 62 min, Wall



Mandolin 29m, 29C, 30+ viz, 63 min, Wall  
Alung Banua 23m, 29C, night, 65 min, Reef  
Nain Island(Batu Kapal) 54m, 29C, 30+ viz, 56 min, Wall (hammerheads)  
Barracuda Point 29m, 29C, 20+viz, 57 min, Wall  
Fukui 26m, 29C, 20m viz, 62 min, Reef  
Liang 24m, 29C, night, 57 min, Reef  
Sachiko 50m, 30C, 30+m viz, 57 min, Wall  
Lekean I 41m, 30C, 30m viz, 63 min, Wall

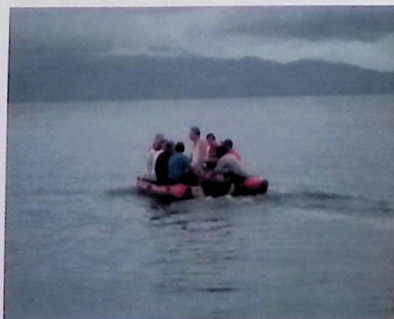
The diving varied from site to site with many different walls – some covered in corals, some with many sponges, some with the occasional coral but masses of fish. Numerous lionfish, morays, pipefish, pygmy seahorse, sea snake, sharks, ribbon eels, blue fusiliers, hand fish, frog fish, nudibranchs(many types), clams, sea hare, parrot fish, Napoleon Wrasse, octopus, devil scorpion fish, shrimp, crays, barracuda, bumphead parrotfish, pufferfish, crabs, angel fish, leatherjackets, turtles, sweetlips, tuna, jacks, mantis shrimp, trevally, blue spotted rays, eagle ray, black snapper, trumpeter, sea moth, hammerheads, blacktips, aneme fish, clown fish, triton trigger fish, and mega other fish too many to name.



The trip home was uneventful, except for a few more #!?! forms! - we arrive back in Singapore at 5pm and then onto Melbourne, arriving at about 6am on the Sunday morning. I was home at about 8am thanks to Peter Briggs and caught a couple of hours sleep before ringing JL to see if the divers were still down at Queenscliff and diving on the Monday – they weren't so I had to wait a week before re-acclimatising to the 'Temperate' Melbourne water(s).

A great trip was had by all and if you have the chance to dive Sulawesi then I strongly recommend it! Superb diving, superb food and of course superb company. Where/when is the next trip? Thanks to Mick Jeacle for his organisation and effort.

Alan Storen







## Sulawesi Tour 2009

*I'd never been on a liveaboard and didn't know what to expect, but like most things in life if you go away with the right people everything falls into place.*

*The weather was perfect, warm, with the water and outside temp much the same, we had a few tropical storms and lots of sunshine which is pretty much what you are looking for in a diving holiday. The diving was always good and all those who dive at home in our cold and tidal waters of Melbourne found conditions near perfect. To dive to 40 mt plus and still see the surface whilst surrounded with marine life is why most divers take up the sport.*

*We dived 3 times daily and 4 if you cared for a night dive. Most times I dived in just a pair of board shorts and 4 to 6 kg of lead, what a difference from 14kg and 2 x 7 mm suits.*

*My highlight was our early morning trying to find hammerhead sharks, they found us and came in for a real close look, I have never seen sharks this big before, I estimate them at around 4.5mt, they swam straight at me and turned a few metres away, I didn't see their distinctive head shape so I'm not sure they were hammerheads but they sure were big and fast, a long way to go for a 20 second encounter but bloody fantastic. I'd never been to 50mt before and my computer wasn't at all happy. Back up compare notes and have a few more beers at night, what more could you ask?*

*Our crew was fantastic, The weather and diving near perfect, to anchor under a live volcano for the night, unforgettable. Big Mick took ill and I had him measured for a coffin (or chuck him overboard), he came good thanks to Pam and all in all we had a great trip*



Peter Briggs

## Fondling In Bed

After 20 years of marriage, a couple was lying in bed one evening, when the wife felt her husband begin to fondle her in ways he hadn't in quite some time.

It almost tickled as his fingers started at her neck, and then began moving down past the small of her back.

He then caressed her shoulders and neck, slowly worked his hand down over her breasts, stopping just over her lower stomach.

He then proceeded to place his hand on her left inner arm, caressed past the side of her breast again, working down her side, passed gently over her buttock and down her leg to her calf. Then, he proceeded up her inner thigh, stopping just at the uppermost portion of her leg. He continued in the same manner on her right side, then suddenly stopped, rolled over and started to watch the tv.

As she had become quite aroused by this caressing, she asked in a loving voice, "That was wonderful. Why did you stop?"

He said, "I found the remote".



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