

FATHOMS

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

FEBRUARY — MARCH 2010



Alan Storen on the Coogee - photo Trevor Williams

www.vsag.org.au

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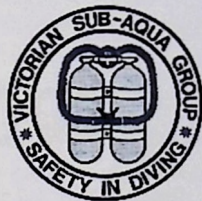
145 Johnston St

Newport VIC 3015





FATHOMS



Official Journal of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group

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VSAG General Meetings
3rd Thursday in the month

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EDITORIAL

Don't know about you but for me the diving has been fantastic lately and there is more to come. Visibility has been 15+m on many of the dives and VSAG has had many divers out on/in the water. Often 15 to 20 divers on many dives and boat space is at a premium. Don't let that put you off booking in as I am sure all can be accommodated.

We have many reports on these and other diving adventure this edition including: overseas (Greg Breese in NZ) and interstate (David Ujimoto (Qld), Greg Richards (SA) and David Geekie (NSW).



The exHMAS Canberra obviously features heavily in this edition and thank you to the many photographers that have sent in images. (Mary Malloy, Trevor Williams, Alex Ivanov, Ken Methven and John Lawler). What a fantastic dive the Canberra is and many club members have dusted off their gear and joined us in the water. As well as the usual crowd we have sighted – Llew, Bazza, Nev Viapree, Tony Tipping, Gordon Brown, Meg Johnson and many others on the wreck. Many have completed several dives and still rave about the dive on ascent. I think I have just hit double figures! Great to see Trevor Williams back in Melbourne and diving the Canberra also. Hopefully we can have an article or two from him soon.

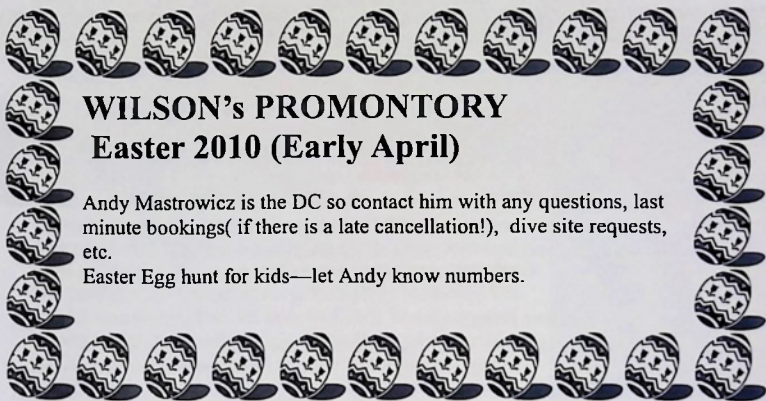
The photo comp closes at the end of Feb so get those images to Greg Breese asap so that they can be judged by photographer extraordinaire Dave Bryant. There will also be a 'popular' vote at the March General meeting so come along and support your favourite photo. Winners will be highlighted in the April- May edition.

If you are interested in a night dive contact Lloyd Borrett – could be a twilight dive depending on starters. Currently he is looking at a Tuesday but open to suggestions. At stated at the last general meeting we hope to include a LETTER TO THE EDITOR section soon. It was to be this edition but I am still waiting for the emails to hit the desk!!! If you have any comments, positive or negative on any VSAG or diving related matter please do not hesitate to forward to me. I can print under a non-deplume, anonymously or under your name – just let me know your preference. After we have published a letter please feel free to agree, disagree or give you feedback to the author.

Sorry—did not have room for creature feature this edition—next time!
Stay hydrated – get under the water!

Cheers
Alan

“Diving is living – everything else is surface interval!”



WILSON's PROMONTORY Easter 2010 (Early April)

Andy Mastrowicz is the DC so contact him with any questions, last minute bookings(if there is a late cancellation!), dive site requests, etc.

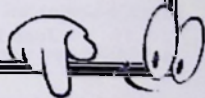
Easter Egg hunt for kids—let Andy know numbers.



Breaking News!!

Red Velvet Fish seen on the deck of the Canberra—just below the bridge—hope it make the ship its home!

Photo by Martina Fuchsberger



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 2009 - 2010



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

ALL MEMBERS WELCOME

Leighoah Hotel 1555 Dandenong Rd Oakleigh.

President's page

Christmas is over and the club has had some very successful days diving in the holiday period.

Over Christmas many members were away on holidays at various exotic locations and some of them have reported in this months Fathoms. Although not having a dedicated trip away we had well attended dives on at least 7 different days from the Melbourne based divers. The sites included the HMAS Canberra, The J5 Sub (twice), The Coogee, Lonsdale Wall, Castle Rock, Twin Bommies, Magic Reef, and also the Phillip Island Pinnacles.

The visibility has been in the 15-20m range on nearly all dives and a great time was had by all concerned. We had 20 divers on one occasion and 16 on another. The club is certainly strong and thriving with numbers like that turning up.

Our January meeting at Bells Hotel was well attended with an excellent guest speaker in Ken Hoppen. Ken spoke on Diving With Humpbacks in Tonga and also diving with Whale Sharks at Christmas Island.

New members keep joining and I would like to welcome Laurant & Laura Fontaine, Neil Richardson plus Geoff Orbell into the club.

We are diving most weekends at present and if you want to come just give the Dive Captain a call and book in.

Keep diving.

Regards,

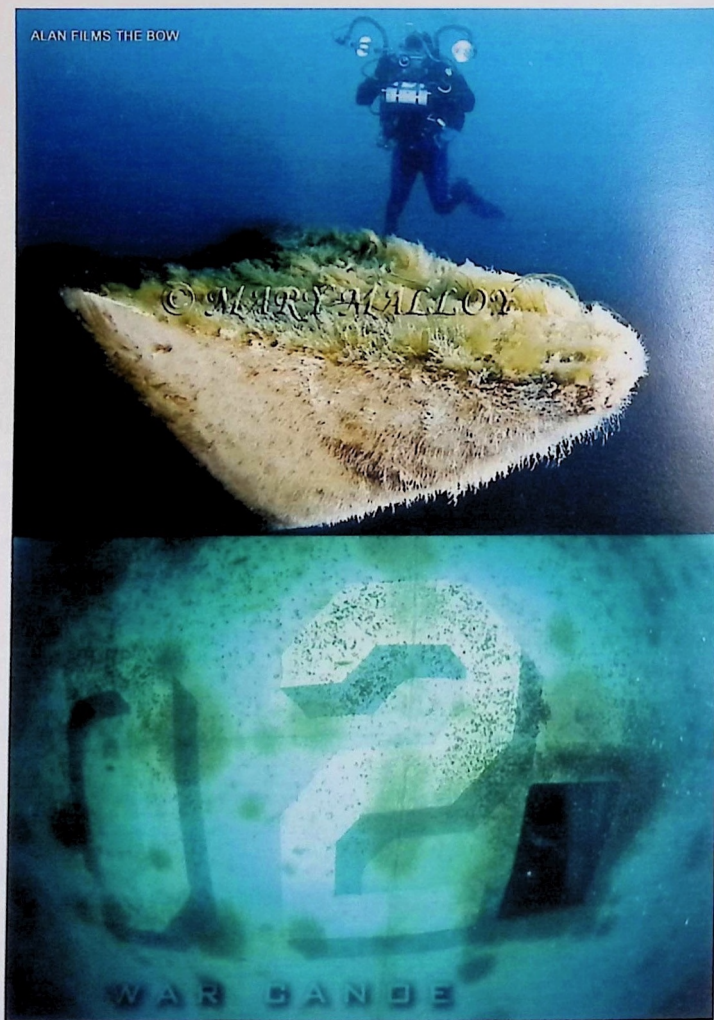
Greg Richards



STILL FOR SALE—See Peter Briggs

7 VSAG Caps, 1 large Polo and 2 x XL T'shirt

Diving the Canaberra



CANBERRA DIVE NEWS

It is said by those who know (usually people who pay a quick visit) that Canberra is a dark, gloomy, cold place. Well, that might be so but I have found after a couple of visits that Canberra is a place with secrets. Little bars in shopping strips that pump out entertainment, jazz groups just "doin' it" and cafes that give you taste sensations. Sure the roads are one way and seem to go in circles, but the tree growth and leafy suburbs make Canberra a tranquil sleepy place at first appearance.

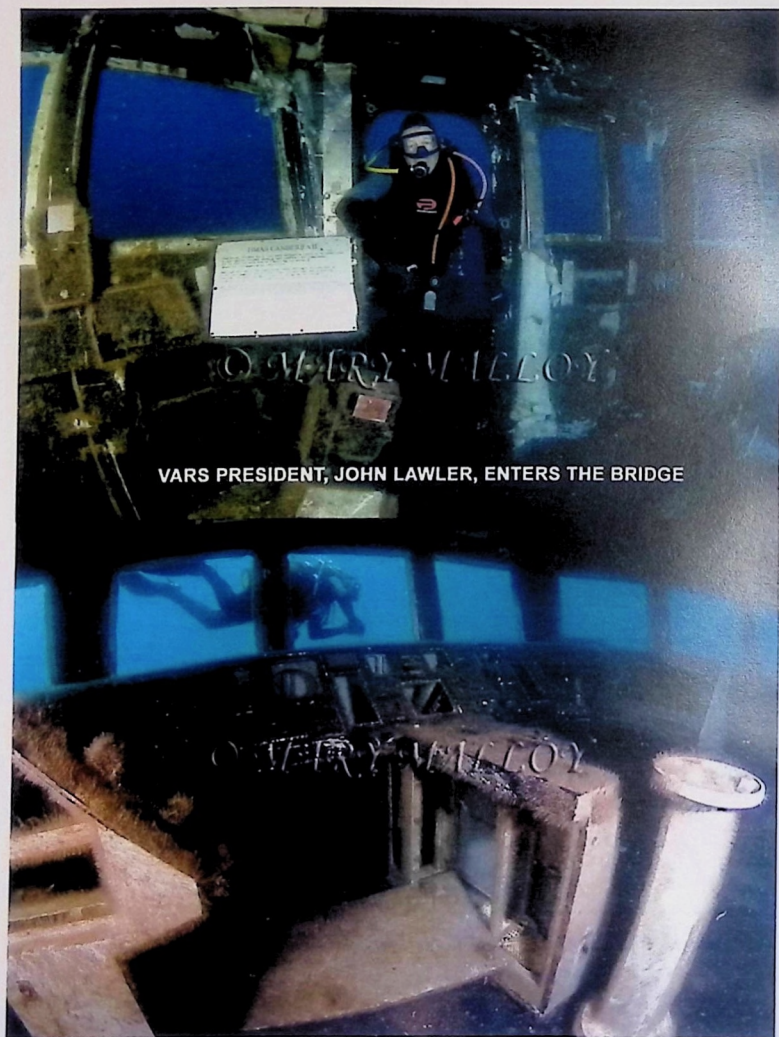
Not so with the ex-HMAS Canberra, this ship is bright, bold and exciting. A number of trade divers & staff members were invited to dive on our new shipwreck by Dive Victoria. The first thing we noticed were the mooring buoys, large and easy to see and positioned just where you would want them. Dive Vic have attached a short length of rope with an eye loop at the end to slip over the bollard, this sure makes it quick and easy, although we were told that Parks will be fixing a bungy system to it. As this dive was to check out any dangers or concerns we scoured the wreck and removed the loose sheets of stainless steel that had come loose during the sinking. We can safely say that there are no more loose bits other than a bit of ceiling padding which is quite soft and will eventually fall to the bottom in small pieces. The anchor chain is a good dive area and even with twins on you can travel through the anchor locker. The chain hangs like a Mexican moustache, drooping over the ships side and chain locker going nowhere inside and outside the ship. Looking at the bow area you will see two long lengths of chain, running down to and around the missile launcher, which was used as the tow point when it came from Fremantle. Two huge shackles are prominent on the port side and they join the chain. Growth on the wreck already has almost covered the chain and shackles. Moving towards the stern you can look down the missile launcher and although some bars block the tighter tubes the main tunnel is open and you can drop down 4 decks.

Well that's probably one dive if you spend time looking at the anchor locker and the numbers on the side near the bow. Many dives later is a promise you will still be wanting more! The beauty of the ship is the depth it's at, ideal for nitrox, twins and single tanks... Bottom time can be doubled dependant on consumption of course. Penetration requires either twins or a pony with the relevant certification and experience.. However singles work just fine and safely and a number of divers did the dive on singles.

Let's get down to the nitty gritty, did we enjoy the dive? You bet your split fins we did.. The vis was down a bit with a big chop on the surface and a strong northerly wind blowing. even so we found the vis on the wreck to be 20 metres outside and unlimited inside. Moving through the wreck there are showers, galley, communications room, mess deck with the mural, lots of passageways, machinery, pumps, gauges, washing and drying machines plus a million somethings that make up a warship.

The ex-HMAS Canberra is as exciting underwater as it was on the surface, it stands proud facing the South bracing itself against any big "blow". A truly great experience, so the beautiful "O2 War Canoe" is waiting for you..go see her!!

Warrick McDonald



VARs PRESIDENT, JOHN LAWLER, ENTERS THE BRIDGE

Canberra photos by Mary Malloy

Penguins

Did you ever wonder why there are no dead penguins on the ice in Antarctica - where do they go ?

Wonder no more !!!

It is a known fact that the penguin is a very ritualistic bird which lives an extremely ordered and complex life.

The penguin is very committed to its family and will mate for life, as well as maintaining a form of compassionate contact with its offspring throughout its life. If a penguin is found dead on the ice surface, other members of the family and social circle have been known to dig holes in the ice, using their vestigial wings and beaks, until the hole is deep enough for the dead bird to be rolled into and buried.



The male penguins then gather in a circle around the fresh grave and sing

"Freeze a jolly good fellow"
"Freeze a jolly good fellow."
Then they kick him in the ice hole."

You really didn't believe that I know anything about penguins, did you!



A man is stranded on a desert island, all alone for ten years. One day, he sees a speck in the horizon. He thinks to himself, "It's not a ship." The speck gets a little closer and he thinks, "It's not a boat." The speck gets even closer and he thinks, "It's not a raft." Then, out of the surf comes this gorgeous blonde woman, wearing a wet suit and scuba gear.

She comes up to the man and she says, "How long has it been since you've had a cigarette?"

"Ten years!" he says.

She reaches over, unzips the waterproof pocket on her left sleeve and pulls out a pack of fresh cigarettes. He takes one, lights it, takes a long drag and says, "Man, oh man! Is that good!"

Then she asked, "How long has it been since you had a drink of whiskey?"

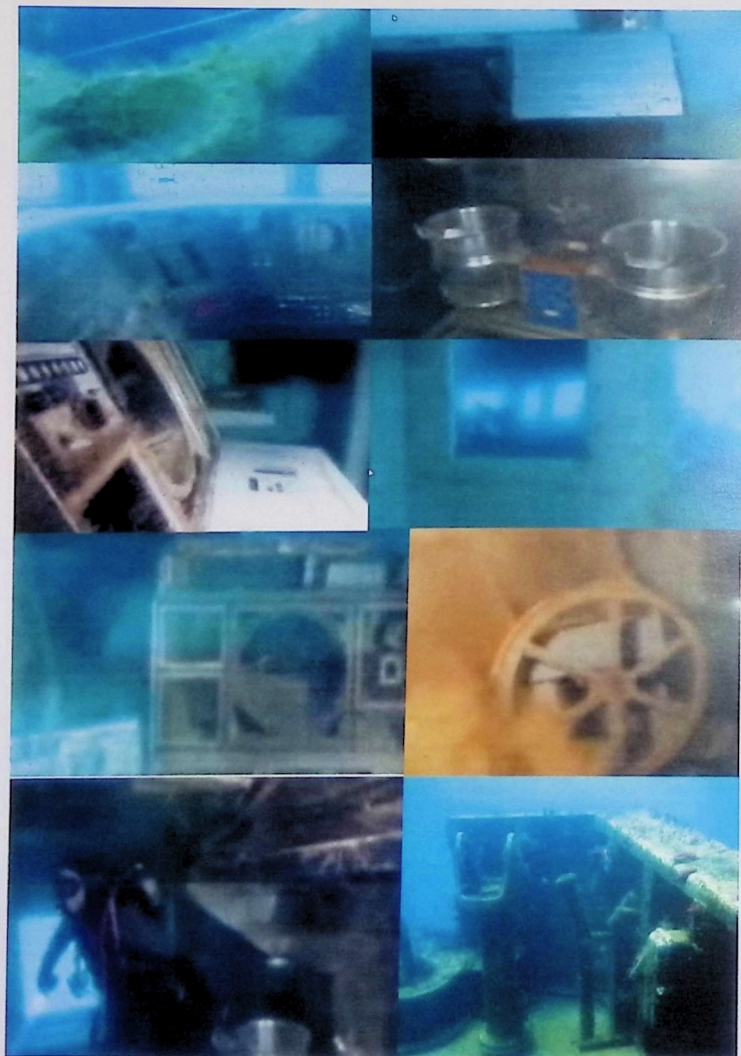
He replies, "Ten years!"

She reaches over, unzips the waterproof pocket on her right sleeve, pulls out a flask and gives it to him. He takes a long swig and says, "Wow, that's fantastic!"

Then she starts unzipping the long zipper that runs down the front of her wet suit and she says to him, "And how long has it been since you had some REAL fun?"

And the man cries out, "My God! Don't tell me you've got a set of golf clubs in there, too!"

Some photos inside the Canberra



IBANANAS! Bananas and boats —fact or fiction!!

On a recent VSAG dive Greg Richards was severely chastised by JL for bringing a banana onto his boat. Was this the act of an isolated bananaphobe? Well you can forget about black cats crossing your path or broken mirrors, because to many fishermen around the world, there is nothing unluckier than a banana on board a boat.

A 'discussion' followed and I thought that I would do some research into the 'real facts'.

This article was taken from Boating World Magazine

There are many stories why bananas have been thought of as bad luck on boats. Many stories have banana oil rubbing off on ones hands and "spooking" the fish; therefore the fish don't bite. There is always the story of a crew member slipping on the banana peel left on the deck. Some say that bananas give you the runs so you are always in the marine head and can't catch fish because you are busy "draining the pipes". Many other stories are told about bad luck and bananas, however the one that I find most plausible is a historical one.

Back in the days of the transatlantic crossings by wooden sailing ships many hazards would befall the captains, crew and passengers. Disease, pirates, shipwrecks, storms, etc., claimed the lives of a good percentage of the captains, crew and passengers attempting the dangerous voyage. Needless to say, a transatlantic crossing in the 17th and 18th centuries was a very risky endeavour. Often the vessels would stop along the way in tropical islands to gather provisions such as food and water. There the passengers and crew would often purchase wooden crates of bananas from the locals and bring them aboard the ship. These crates would have all manner of critters in them such as bugs, spiders, vermin and snakes.

These critters would make their way into the bilges of the ships, multiply, and then find their way into the captain's quarters. The captains circulated the rumour that bananas were bad luck in an attempt to keep the critters off the ship and out of their cabin. The crew and passengers were more than eager to follow suit because of the inherent risk of the crossing. So, if the captain announced prior to the voyage that bananas were bad luck and not allowed aboard the vessel, everyone complied. You must remember that these were the days of burning witches and the like, so superstitions were taken very seriously.

A more scientific explanation is that since bananas give off ethylene gas when they ripen, it causes other perishable foodstuffs to spoil more quickly. This expended-gas theory could be why it's also considered unlucky to have a politician on board.

Watermen are a mysterious lot. While we are known for our simple pragmatism, we also have many odd quirks. Superstitions have been prevalent on almost every vessel I have worked on. I feel that this is due to the nature of a waterman in that he sees the randomness of the world around him juxtaposed with the rhythmic, seasonal flows of nature and then tries to reconcile these observations into some sort of personal and/or environmental order. As Stevie Wonder (a blind man) pointed out so eloquently: "When you believe in things you can't understand, that's superstition".

XX
I don't know if any of the above is true but I have just noticed that this article ended up on page 13!! Purely by chance!

I will leave the decision on whether to take a banana onboard any VSAG boats to a polite discussion between you and the Captain!

Alan Storen



Member Profile: Lloyd Borrett

Year joined VSAG: 2006.

How long have you been diving? Since February 2006.

First diving experience: Try dive at Rye Pier. I was either on the bottom or the surface!

Favourite diving location in Melbourne: There are so many and it depends on my mood! Pier: Blairgowrie. It just doesn't get much any better than that. Reef:

Rosebud Reef. Not spectacular, but a nice, interesting, chill out dive. Wall: Anywhere on the walls at the end of the Bay. Drift: Blasting up from Point Lonsdale to Queenscliff. Wreck: It was the Eliza Ramsden, which I was lucky enough to visit on my second ever boat dive while still on my Open Water course. I haven't been game enough to revisit now that the bow has collapsed. In November 2009, I finally dived the J5 Sub. Why did it take me so long to visit a dive site that special? And of course now I'm beginning to explore the mighty HMAS Canberra. Surely nowhere else has it this good?

Most memorable diving experience: How do you pick just one! In Melbourne, how about my first day out diving from Mick Jeacle's boat on a VSAG new diver day. What a newbie I was. And I don't think anyone noticed that I nearly drowned myself after taking off my BCD with my weight harness still on! See <http://www.vsaq.org.au/Content/pid=94.html> for the full details. In Victoria, it has to be Easter 2009 at Wilsons Prom. It just doesn't get any more magnificent than that.



Overseas, it has to be Bali. The huge variety of interesting dive sites and the welcoming hospitality of Tony and Wyan at Tulamben Wreck Divers makes that place so very special.

Most unusual or amusing diving experience: Home: The special glint JL gets in his eyes when diving is done for the day and he pushes the throttle forward to head back in. It cracks me up every time.

Away: It's the beginning of our fifth day diving on the SS President Coolidge in Espirito Santo, Vanuato. We're heading down to visit the soda fountain and swimming pool on a dive with a max depth of about 57 metres. This is another 10 metres deeper than my previous deepest dive just the day before. The dive guide, Benita and Leo lead the way from the soda fountain through an opening and around to the swimming pool. I try to follow them but get stuck in the opening! The others disappear around the corner. I check my dive computer and it begins to dawn on me that being stuck at a depth of 55 metres is not a good thing. So I start to wriggle about a bit and eventually work my way free just as the others are coming back to look for me. That night I was given a new nickname "Bung Borrett". For the rest of our dives on the Coolidge, I wasn't allowed to go last again.

Most valued piece of diving equipment: My dive buddy, whoever he or she may be. A big thank you to everyone who has looked after me while underwater. Especially when in the beginning how long a dive will be was described as, until Lloyd sucks his 15 litre cylinder to 80 bar, sucks his 1st buddy's cylinder to 80 bar, and sucks his 2nd dive buddy's cylinder to 80 bar — that will be about 15 minutes! As my diving kit, it has to be my OMS IQ Pack and Dual Bladder Wing BCD. I do see the puzzled looks and shaking of heads from various VSAG divers as I prepare for a dive with such a complicated looking setup. I tried a lot



of BCDs before buying one, and this setup was simply the only one I felt truly comfortable in. And it's not as complicated as it might look.

Do you have a dive boat?

I wish! But I do have an excellent spot in the back yard to park one under cover. So if anyone has a dive boat they want to give away to a good home, please consider.

If you could dive anywhere in the world, where would you most like to dive?

Bikini Atoll. I was booked to go in 2009 but diving there has been cancelled because of airline problems. Now I'm booked to dive the Galapagos Islands in 2011 which should be something quite unique. I'm also trying to get to Truk Lagoon in 2010. Anyone interested?



Any diving words of wisdom: Stay safe and lookout for your dive buddy. Oh, and always feel free to not start a dive, or call a dive off at anytime. If your dive buddies are truly any good, they'll understand and won't even ask why. Plus, try taking a deep stop for 1 or 2 minutes at half max depth on dives below 20 metres. I feel heaps better and recover faster after a dive when I do this.

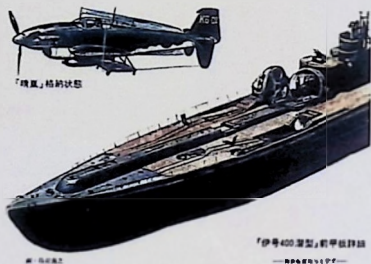
Any other comments: The thing I've most enjoyed about scuba diving is the people I've met and the friends I've made. VSAG has been a big part of that. A hugely diverse group of people drawn together by a common interest. People who know life has to be fun to be lived fully. Sure, we all need to get out and dive more. Of course the exception is Alan Storen who needs to become more accustomed to time spent above water.



Some more Canberra Shots

AIRFIELD UNDER THE SEA

JAPAN'S SUBMERSIBLE I-400 AIRCRAFT CARRIERS



His Imperial Japanese Majesty's "Sensuikan Toku" [Special Submarines]. Designed specifically to attack the Panama Canal.

In many ways IJMS I-400 was decades ahead of her time. She was the world's largest submarine with a length of 400-ft and a surface displacement of 3,530 tons. Above her main deck rose a 115-ft. long, 12-ft diameter, hangar housing three torpedo-bombers. These float planes were rolled out through a massive hydraulic door onto an 85-ft pneumatic catapult, where they were rigged for flight, fuelled, armed, launched, and after landing alongside, lifted back aboard with a powerful hydraulic crane. The I-400 was equipped with a snorkel, radar, radar detectors, and capacious fuel tanks that gave her a range of 37,500 miles: One and a half times around the world. She was armed with eight torpedo tubes, a 5.5-in 50-cal deck gun, a bridge 25mm anti-aircraft gun, and three triple 25 mm A/A mounts atop her hangar. The advent of guided missiles and atomic bombs transformed her from dinosaur to an overspecialized undersea menacing strategic threat. The I-400 was originally designed so that it could travel round-trip to anywhere in the world, and it was specifically intended to destroy the U.S. controlled Panama Canal. A fleet of 18 boats was planned in 1942, and work on the first one was started in 1943 at the Kure, Hiroshima arsenal. Within a year the plan was scaled back to five, and four (I-400, I-401, I-14 and I-13) were completed.



The I-400's had aircraft storage and catapult for three M6A1 *Seiran* (Storm from a Clear Sky) torpedobombers. These specially designed float planes had a length of 35-ft, a wingspread of 40-ft, a range of 654 miles, and a munitions payload of 1800-lb.

Additional fuel and bombs could be carried by jettisoning the floats on one-way missions where the pilots and planes were to be expended.. The sleek *Seiran* bombers, built by Aichi Kokuki at Nagoya, were stowed in the hangar compartment with floats detached and wings and tails folded. Actually with the stabilizers folded down, and the top of the vertical stabilizer folded over the overall profile of the aircraft was within the diameter of its propellor. A trained team could rig a floatplane for launch with fuel and armament in as short a time as seven minutes, in fact that trained same trained team could prepare all three planes, and have them in the air in under 45 minutes time. The planes were launched from a 120 foot catapult on the deck of the giant submarine.

Accommodations for a crew of 145 were designed into the capacious twin hulls, but on most occasions was much higher....somewhere in the 200+ range. The reason for the high

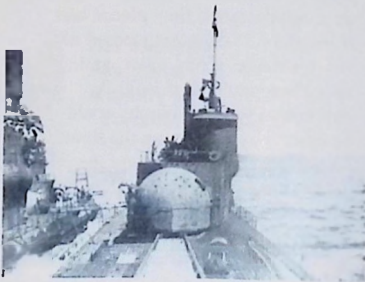


number was to facilitate speedy submarine and aviation operations at sea. Even though the sub could surface, the trained crew could in fact could break out, assemble, fuel, arm, and catapult all three aircraft.....more men was an "assurance" of that. Also the I-400's had great cruising range which enabled them to launch her three bombers within striking distance of targets as far from Japan as San Francisco, the Panama Canal, Washington, or New York. All of these missions were considered by the Tokyo Naval Strategists.

Below the hangar in the starboard twin hull was a special compartment equipped to conduct aircraft engine overhaul and test. An adjacent magazine stored four aircraft torpedoes, 15 bombs, and gun ammunition; more shells were stored topside in pressure-proof, ready-use lockers handy to the guns. Each of the two engine rooms housed a pair of 1900-hp diesels linked through Vulcan hydraulic couplings to drive the twin propeller shafts.

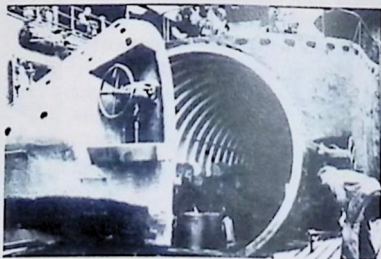
A 1200-hp electric motorgenerator on each shaft drew electricity from her storage batteries to drive her submerged. With a clean bottom this propulsion plant gave her a top speed of 18.7 knots on the surface and 6.5 knots below snorkel depth.

Meals for her oversize crew were prepared in a galley in the starboard hull, where large steam kettles turned out great quantities of rice. As in all long range submarines, a four month supply of food was stowed in every cranny, including a layer of crates laid out on deck which the crew walked on until they'd eaten their way through. Supernumeraries slept on the deck wherever they could find a nook, being used to a floor and tatami mat.



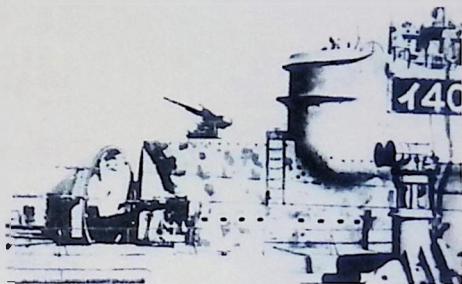
OPERATIONAL HISTORY

Several surviving Japanese submariners have described the hopes that accompanied the completion of the top secret boats in late 1944. As they became available the four giant submarines were assigned to a newly created SubRon One, a ten-bomber strike force. For their first mission V. Adm. Jisaburo Ozawa, Vice Chief of the Navy General Staff, selected



Operation PX, a top secret plan to use SubRon One's ten aircraft to unleash bacteriological warfare on populous areas of the American west coast and Pacific Islands. Infected rats and insects would be dispersed to spread bubonic plague, cholera, dengue fever, typhus and other plagues. General Ishii's infamous medical laboratory at Harbin, Manchuria, had developed the virulent germ warfare agents and confirmed their lethality by infecting helpless Chinese and Caucasian prisoners. On 26 March 1945, this sinister mission was cancelled by Gen. Yoshijiro Umezui, Chief of the Army General Staff, who declared that, "Germ warfare against the United States would escalate to war against all humanity." As an alternative the staff considered bombing San Francisco, Panama, Washington or New York, and decided to launch a surprise air strike against the Panama Canal's Gatun Locks. Destroying these locks would empty Gatun Lake and block the passage of shipping for months.

For the 17,000 mile round trip to Panama each submarine needed 1600-tons of diesel fuel, which was unavailable at Jure. I-401 was therefore despatched to Dairen, Manchuria, to bring back the needed oil. On 12 April she grazed a B-29 laid mine off Hime Shima Lighthouse in the Inland Sea and had to return for repairs. In her place I-400 successfully carried out the undersea tanker mission.



By early June all four boats were fuelled, armed, equipped with new snorkels, and disguised with false funnels. They sailed north through Tsushima Strait and the Sea of Japan to Nanao Bay on the west coast of Honshu near Takaoka. Training there was hampered by B-29 laid mines. American submarines penetrating their training areas, and shortages of aviation gasoline, material and aircraft, but SubRon One managed to launch a number of simulated air strikes on a full scale model of the Gatun Locks erected at Tayama Bay.

While the submersible carriers were perfecting their tactics to cripple the Panama Canal, the position of the Japanese Navy was steadily deteriorating. Before the submarines

could set sail for Panama more than 3,000 Allied warships and transports had reached the Pacific for Operation Olympic, the forthcoming invasion of Japan. This growing threat forced Tokyo strategists to reconsider the attack on distant Panama, which now appeared a questionable diversion. The I subs was ordered to abandon their carefully rehearsed canal strike and attack instead American Naval forces at Ulithi Atoll.

Super sub

The largest Japanese Navy's I-401 was 400 feet long and built to do out underwater aircraft carriers during World War II. Here's how it compares in size with the USS Bowfin, the World War I-era S-19, a Japanese midget sub, and the research sub Phoenix, a high hand the I-401 has week.



© 2000 BENTON

In response to the new orders I-13 proceeded on 4 July, to the Ominato Naval Base on the northern tip of Honshu. There she loaded two crated Nakajima C6N2 *Ayagumo* (Colored Cloud) long range reconnaissance aircraft, then sailed into the Pacific through Tsugaru Strait bound for Japan's island stronghold of Truk.

After repairing a hot propeller bearing I-14 followed on 14 July. On the 23rd, I-400 and I-401 departed Ominato on separate tracks far to the east for a rendezvous at sea southeast of Ulithi in three weeks.



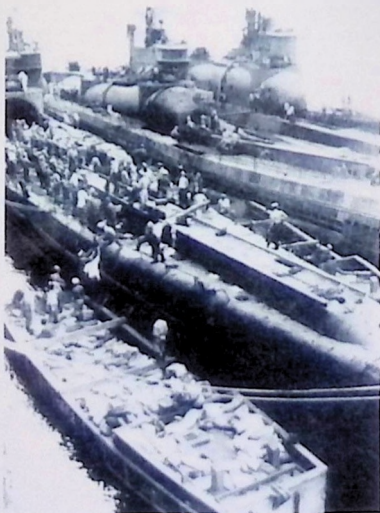
Suddenly, on 15 August, Emperor Hirohito broadcast direct from the Imperial Palace this dramatic decree ending hostilities. The I-boats crews were thunderstruck; their combat careers ended just as they reached the attack rendezvous. After a council of war meet, the shattered ComSubRon One reluctantly carried out Tokyo's orders to cease hostilities, hoist a black

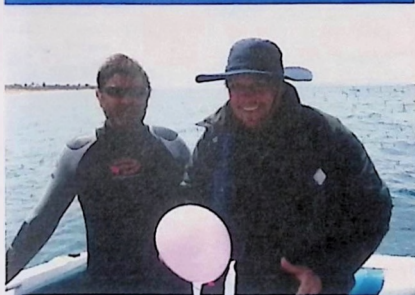
flag, and return on the surface to home port. The captains of the I-boats were ordered to jettison all documents and munitions, fire all torpedoes, and catapult all aircraft into the sea. When I-401 surrendered to an American destroyer, the U.S. crew was astounded at its size. The commander of the submarine fleet, Captain Ariizumi, apparently decided on suicide rather than surrender to the Americans. He requested that his body be wrapped in the Japanese flag and buried at sea and shot himself. His body was never presented as proof of his death.

The U.S. Navy boarded and recovered 24 submarines including the four I-400 subs, taking them to Sasebo Bay to study them. While there, they received a message that the Soviets were sending an inspection team to examine the submarines. To keep the technology out of the hands of the Soviets, Operation Road's End was instituted. Most of the submarines were taken to a position designated as Point Deep Six, about 40 miles west from Nagasaki and off the island of Goto- Retto, were packed with charges of C-2 explosive and destroyed. They are today at a depth of 200 meters.

Four remaining submarines (I-400, I-401, I-201 and I-203 which achieved speeds double those of American submarines), were sailed to Hawaii by U.S. Navy technicians for further inspection. Upon completion of the inspections, the submarines were scuttled in the waters off Kalaeloa near Oahu in Hawaii by torpedoes from American submarine USS Cabezon on May 31, 1946. The reason for the scuttling is apparently that Russian scientists were again demanding access to the submarines. The wreckage of I-401 was re-discovered by the Pisces submarines deep-sea submarines of the Hawaii Undersea Research Laboratory in March 2005 at a depth of 820 meters.

XX





PHILIPPINES SOJOURN

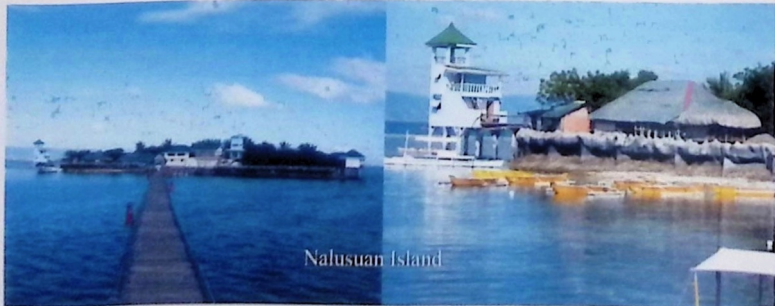
Many will be aware that our eldest unmarried daughter Samantha commenced a two year teaching contract at Cebu International School in the Philippines last August. Annie saw this as a great opportunity to visit her over Christmas, and Jessica also joined us when she finished work on 19 December. To take advantage of the cheap airfares we needed to depart Melbourne before 8 December and return on 6 January, giving us a full month away. We sure hoped we would like the place.

Samantha was very pleased to see us and we were soon settled in to her three bedroom apartment and working on a list of things to do and see during our stay. To this end, Samantha had a variety of small trips organised for us later after Jess arrived and she had completed her term at CIS.

Our first small trip for Annie & me was an overnight stay at Nalusuan Island, a forty minute banca boat ride from the east coast of Mactan Island. This is a tiny place and one can walk from one end to the other in about one minute. However the setting was brilliant and Annie commented that she now felt like she truly was on holiday after enjoying some great snorkelling there surrounded by a large school of yellow snappers. Unfortunately I was unaware that there was a dive operator on the island but I did get to do two great wall dives there at a later date. These dives turned out to be the best dives of the trip.



Samantha's school in Cebu



Nalusuan Island

Some 3 days later Samantha had arranged for a local dive operator to pick me up at 8AM for a day's diving at Mactan Island. After finding out that 3 other divers would be joining us, I suggested we hire a banca boat to take us out to Nalusuan and all agreed. Here we enjoyed the wall dives mentioned above and whilst we did not sight any large fish we did come



across a large school of jacks in a spiralling ball formation, a great sight indeed. One of the other divers was a 70 year old bloke who had recently taken up diving. At about 15 minutes into our first dive at around 20 meters depth, I watched in amazement as dive guide Alfred simply removed the scuba tank from his backpack and replaced it with a full one complete with regs and gauges so that he could complete the dive with the rest of us. When the old bloke asked me how much air I had left after he had gulped his way through two tanks full, and I told him 80 Bar, his lighthearted response was "I hate you!"

Our first "family" trip after Jess arrived was to the majestic island of Bohol. This island is renowned for its diving but I decided to do the family thing and leave my gear at home. We enjoyed two nights at Bohol Bee Farm, an idyllic place to just unwind and veg out. Probably the highlight here as our 2pm visit to nearby Alona Beach where we enjoyed swimming and an evening meal on the fairy light lit beach that evening. Upon checking out the next morning we were picked up by a young Aussie tour operator who drove us to some interesting attractions, including the Tarsier Foundation where we were privileged to observe these tiny primates in their natural habitat.



Ferry we caught to Bohol



A Tarsier seen in the forest.

Our next stay was to be at the aptly named "Nuts Huts" also on Bohol. Our tour operator let us off at a river landing where we took a short boat ride to our accommodation. These were Nipa Huts situated right on the edge of the Lopok river, and were pretty basic. The reception area and dining room were situated atop a steep stair climb of 131 25cm steps; not good in clammy heat. However once up there it was quite pleasant as we were literally seated amongst the tree tops. One night here was enough.



Nipa Hut (Nuts Huts)



Chocolate Hills on Bohol



Alona Beach on Bohol.

Back to Cebu and Christmas dinner with Samantha and her friends before setting off to Malapascua Island, situated some 7 kms off the northern tip of Cebu Island. To get there we hired a private car for the 3 hour trip (and return) as Samantha stated we would not want to travel all that way in a crowded, smelly, uncomfortable bus making multiple stops along the way. We were booked into Blue Corals, a two storey establishment which juts out



Christmas dinner
(lechon or suckling pig)

over the water at the end of the main beach. The rooms were clean and comfortable and the view from our bedroom window was superb; a real steal at the princely sum of \$37.50 per night.

Diving on Malapascua is famous for its thresher sharks and manta rays which visit Monad Shoal from the depths daily to be cleaned by the cleaner fish.

Upon advice from Alfred I locate a small dive operator some 200 meters in from the beachfront called Dan's Dives. I struck a deal with Dan who agreed that if I had 3 dives or more with his operation, I would pay only \$25 per dive seeing that I had all my own gear. This was much less than the larger operators were charging, and dive guide Kenneth was a delight. The best part was that they left from right out the front of our room and they looked after my gear until after my last dive, when it was delivered back to me.

I booked into an early dive next morning, leaving at 6AM, in the hope that I would see a thresher shark. Monad Shoal is a 30 minute boat trip away and I was the only diver on this trip apart from Kenneth, who was accompanied by two crew and the boat driver.

Extraordinary, given that I was only paying \$25 for the dive.

Unfortunately we did not see a shark this day as the visibility was poor, and I learned later that in these conditions there was only about a 50/50 chance of success. That night I did a "sunset" dive with Kenneth at 5.15pm, mainly to ensure that I logged at least 3 dives. Whilst I saw some interesting critters on this dive, including bright yellow sea horses, night diving is not really my thing and it may be some time before I do another one.

The next day I spoke to Dan about diving at Calangaman Island, some two



hours away by Banca boat. To go there he would need a minimum of 2 divers who would need to pay a fuel levy of \$7 as well as the dive fee. He agreed to take Annie and the girls for around \$9 each, with this price including full snorkel gear thrown in. The next morning we had four divers so it was all systems go and we left the beach at around 9.30am. This turned out to be a great day, with the girls enjoying some great snorkelling in clear blue water, and me enjoying two great wall dives where I sighted turtles and a variety of sea snakes.



We returned to Cebu the next day and after 3 and 1/2 hours on the road we arrived home fairly tired and decided not to go out on NYE. Filipinos are mad on fireworks and they are for sale everywhere. Almost every night we say spasmodic displays from our high vantage point, but NYE was something else. At 11.20pm they got serious, but at midnight it was insane. We had a 180 degree view for several kms and rockets and crackers seemed to be set off everywhere. Not only that, there was no end to it. After some 90 minutes of non stop displays, the sky was filled with smoke. It was time for us to call it a night as we had become bored with it all.

The mode of transport in Cebu is very cheap. In the main it is jeepneys or taxis, with the latter being my preference. I found the jeepneys were too crowded and were lacking in head room for a big Lloyd. A \$60 taxi fare in Melbourne would cost about \$6 in Cebu, but the taxis as a whole were fairly shabby and their shockers were non-existent.



I was able to spend one more dive day with Alfred after he returned from a short trip on 3 January. Previously we had discussed the famous Marigondon Cave and I was keen to see this for myself. For a look at this simply do a Google search and you will find there are also some movies on YouTube. Apparently National Geographic has filmed a story about the cave for screening later this year. Anyway, to reach the cave we swam over and down a steep drop off until the cave entrance (imagine the top of Skull Rock on a smaller scale) came into view.



Maximum depth here is 35 meters and the visibility inside the cave is crystal clear. My LED torch was a winner here, projecting the fish shadows onto the walls and ceilings of the cave, and enabling us to appreciate the sheer magnitude of it. Again Alfred had with him a fairly inexperienced diver so we did not fully penetrate the cave. We did go in some 20 meters, but I could feel an almost uncontrollable magnet pulling me towards the back of the cave, but I resisted the urge as Alfred already had his hands full watching his student. If I ever go back, this dive will be on the list when Alfred and I can do it alone.

After lunch we visited a purpose sunk wooden boat which is now badly broken up. However the fish life here is great, including trumpet fish, spotted sweetlips, yellow snappers, lion fish, sea snakes etc. This spot would make an excellent night dive as the wreck is situated right on top of a drop off. In fact, when they sank the boat it broke in two, and the other half went into the abyss and they only just managed to save the remaining half from the same fate.

Well that completed my diving in Cebu. It was certainly worth the effort of taking my gear, and the diving overall was good, but not fantastic.

Despite the passionate effort of some individuals, dynamiting of fish still goes on, and on a few occasions I could hear the explosions from afar. There is not enough being done to catch the individuals responsible and I just wonder whether this predicament will ever change.

I must say it will be good to get home and experience our climate changes after being bathed in perspiration for 30 days straight. We are also looking forward to a nice juicy thick porterhouse steak and veges, and will not look at chicken or pork for a while. I also look forward to diving the Canberra which was opened for diving the very day before I flew out of Australia. The thought of part time divers Chris Lewellyn and Tony Tipping diving it before me is almost too much to bear.



Dive Report 10 Jan

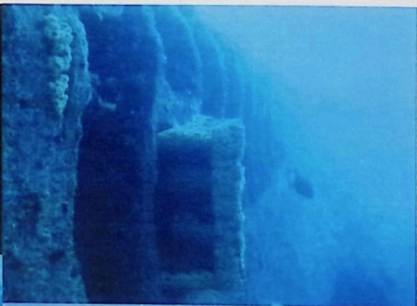
Sunday 10th of Jan forecast looked fantastic and we had 4 vsag boats and around 15 divers. An early start was no problem as the weather was fine and hot. I had my crew and Alex assured me he had driven a manual car before, but on the Sorrento boat ramp is no time to find out he needed a little practice, it all went smoothly enough and before long the heads loomed and we were on the J5. Bridey had a gear malfunction and couldn't dive too deep, Alex buddied up with Ken & Takae for a great dive and I went with the old stagers John & Alan, the old girl still looks pretty good but at that depth a short dive.



The second dive was close to the back beach at Ocean Grove, Bridey and Alex spent close on an hour looking for cray's and abbs, Alex came back with a cray and was very pleased with himself (I bet they don't have too many of them in the Baltic near Moscow) The heads had chopped up a little on our return but we still had a great time with a leisurely return via Portsea to see what all the beautiful people were doing.

A great day on the water with vsag (AREN'T THEY ALL)
Book in for a dive shortly whilst the water and weather in Melbourne are at their best.

Peter Briggs





Who said Greg had not dived the Canberra?

The Plaque—soon to be placed on the Canberra.



About here!

Photo—Warrick McDonald,
 John Lawler and Jason Salter.



Diving The Ex HMAS Hobart.

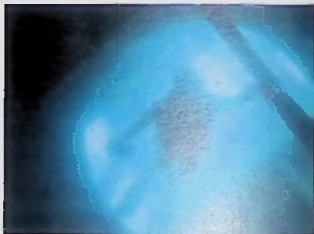
Sick of diving in Melbourne...well Frigate!

Needing to get away from Melbourne for a week over Christmas I decided to have a holiday in Adelaide to dive the Ex HMAS Hobart.

Over the years I have dived at Mt Gambier and once at Robe, but never anywhere else in SA.

With the recent sinking of the Ex HMAS Canberra and having had my 1st dive on it in

December, I figured it would make for a nice peek into the future to see how it might look in 7-8 years.



I organised with Dave Gordon of Alladin Charters to go out for 2 days when I arrived. Dave informed me of a peculiar phenomenon that they get in the area called a "Dodge Tide". A dodge tide is when the difference between high and low is so minimal that effectively there is no current flow for a substantial period and this is the best time to dive the Hobart. This 4-day window of tides happened to be the 1st 4 days of my holidays!

After arriving in Adelaide in the 36C heat of Boxing Day I checked with the skipper and found I was on for an 8.30am start at the Marina St Vincent the next morning.

Arriving early at the Marina I found the boat and as the dive team and other punters turned up we loaded gear aboard the 30ft Alladin and right on time we left.

The dive site is only a 10 minute boat ride in calm conditions- and boy did we have calm conditions. I have never been in the open ocean in conditions this still! It was eery. If only every dive could be done in water this still.

After a thorough briefing from the skipper we were paired up and thrown in.

Descending down the mooring line onto the rear stack we were surrounded by snapper and masses of other reef fish. The top of this is in 7m of water, and it was so amazing I didn't feel like leaving it. Totally covered in soft corals, sponges and other invertebrate life including a healthy population of mussels.

The plan was to explore the rear half and gradually work our way through the interior of the ship and finish back at the aft stack mooring. After initially checking out the underside of the stern we entered through a sizeable cut out on the back. We then spent about 40 minutes ferreting about, going from different rooms and corridors checking out rows of bunks and toilets. Finally we re-appeared on deck and made our way to the missile director and thence to the stack for a safety stop and fish feed.

During the surface interval we enjoyed an on board BBQ sausage sizzle with free soft drinks for all and planned our 2nd foray.



Descending onto the ship a 2nd time we went forward across the magazine deck and slipped into the Engine Room. The room is enormous and is a truly awe inspiring sight.

We explored the mess, the galley, the bridge and checked out the forward gun mount. All of it swarming in fish and festooned with colourful growth. I didn't want to come up.

Over the next few days I dived on the Ex HMAS Hobart another 3 times and although the viz dropped down to 15m and the water cut up a little rough on my last day, I'd happily go back tomorrow.

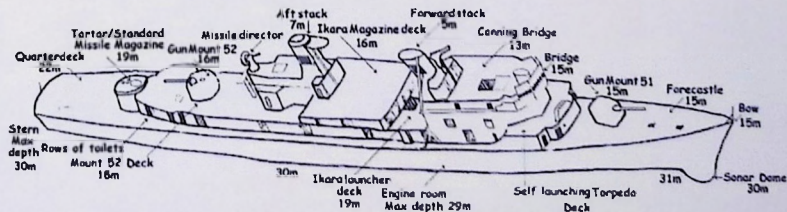
From the Website www.adelaideadventurecharter.com.au

The ex-HMAS Hobart lies in approximately 30m of water with the bow facing toward the land. The decks lie at between 15 and 22m depth, with the guns and bridge in around 15m and the top of the stacks in 5 to 7m. The nature of the wreck, with it's many deck levels, lends itself to multilevel diving which maximises your non-decompression dive time.

A number of mooring lines are attached to the ship and can be used for descent and ascent. Usually the moorings that are attached either to the forward or aft stack so that you can perform a multi-level dive, ending with your safety stop on top of the relevant stack. There is also a line running between the tops of the two stacks.. They also run a swim line from the rear of the boat to the mooring.

The exHMAS Hobart is 133m in length and over 14m wide. This, combined with the fact that it covers many levels vertically, makes it a large and complex dive site. However, it is not difficult to navigate if you take note of some of the distinctive features shown below. In particular, the stacks, guns, missile director, missile magazine and bridge are useful landmarks for orientation.

Greg Richards





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CH Steamer found off Pt Lonsdale

THE rusted wreck of one of Victoria's most famous steamships has been found off Point Lonsdale.

Queenscliff diver, Mr Geoff Nayler, unearthed the Coogee a few weeks ago in 37 metres of water after a local fisherman found her with a depth sounder.

Before being sunk by explosive charges and laid to rest in a ship's graveyard, 5 km south-west of Point Lonsdale in 1928, the Coogee was one of Port Phillip Bay's grandest steamers.

Built in 1887, she was first used as a ferry between Liverpool and the Isle of Man.

In 1889 the 762-ton vessel began trips from Melbourne to Geelong via Portarlington.

By JIM NEVEIN

"She is in surprisingly good condition," Mr Nayler said yesterday.

"The stern is intact as is the bow and a section supporting the boiler, but the rest of it is starting to deteriorate."

In 1903 the Coogee's captain and a crewman died when it slammed into the Italian sailing ship *Fortunato Figari* in dense fog in Bass Strait on a Melbourne to Launceston run.

It later struck a beacon off Geelong and a liner in the Yarra, when the promenade deck came crashing down on passengers.

The railing and seats cushioned the fall and no passengers were injured.

She was a mine-sweeper off Gabo Island in World War 1.

Mr Nayler hopes to start diving tours to 20 wrecks in the area.

VSAG dived the Coogee recently and it is often on the dive calendar.



● GEOFF Nayler with a find from the Coogee.



Alan Storen on the Coogee.



Member Profile: Greg Richards

Year joined VSAG: I first dived with VSAG during the Xmas 2005 trip to Eden. When I returned to Melbourne I had a couple of dives with Mick Jeacle and then decided to join.

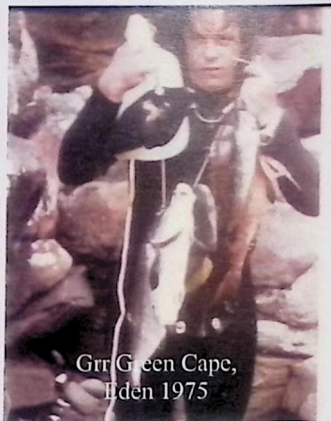
Diving History?: I started spearfishing in 1970. After 4-5 years I got a Nikonos III camera and started taking pictures whilst skindiving. In August 1976 I did a scuba course with ADI in Clayton and somewhere along the way I managed to move to Brisbane for 8 years, have a family and move back to Melbourne. During my time in Brisbane I made the (wise) decision that I was better off without the camera, and sold it to the Qld Museum to use on the Pandora Expeditions.

First diving experiences:

Spearfishing- The Stink Pole Reef at Breamlea (Barwon Heads) in 1970. I didn't realise that the stink pole is actually the stench from the Greater Geelong Area sewage outfall - is it any wonder there were lots of fish there, with all those "rich nutrients" in the water. I seem to remember the fish had a strong nutty flavour...

Scuba diving : Back in the mid 70's your basic scuba course was just that-basic. The first dive was at Flinders Pier and so was the 2nd. That's it, course finished. One of those dives, if not both, lasted about 15 minutes. The odd part of those days was that both the theory and pool sessions were incredibly thorough.

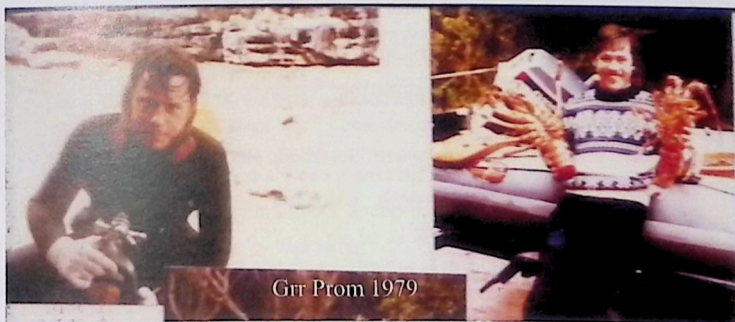
After finishing the 2nd dive, my buddy and I drove down to Cape Schank and did a scuba shore dive in Bushrangers Bay. This today sounds somewhat adventurous, and when we got back from the dive & 800m straight uphill walk, my buddy collapsed from sheer exhaustion and I had to undress him from his gear!



Two months later in Nov 76 I had the 1st of many Melbourne Cup Weekends at Wilsons Prom. It too was tough going, as we didn't have a boat and had to either, swim out to the headlands, or in some cases walk to the end of Norman Point and then down the rock face with full scuba gear and then have a dive.

I had spearfished here for some years prior, and at Easter 1975 I walked across the Prom to Sealers Cove carrying both skindiving gear, wetsuits, weights and camping/cooking gear. As far as I can tell I have never had the urge to do this again. It did however inspire me to get a boat-any boat, as long as it meant no more shore diving.

Favourite diving location in Melbourne: I don't have a favourite location. The entire shoreline from Cape Bridgewater (Portland) right through to the Islands off Wilsons Prom have given me so much fun and pleasure over the years that I'm usually happy to dive wherever the conditions most suit. As long, as it's from a boat.



Most memorable diving experience: Several stand out.

The first dive I ever did on the Rotomahana and my 2nd dive on the J5 Submarine. Both these dives were never to be forgotten days. Millpond conditions, 30m viz and awe inspiring dives.

The Poor Knights Islands were special and I plan on going back in a few months. The squadrons of Rays in the caves, plus the massing fish life, makes this an all time favourite.

I had a dive once on Fido Reef off Tweed Heads and decided to swim across

the sand patch to the next piece of Reef. As we got halfway across the sand patch we kneeled on the bottom to watch a few Leopard Sharks and a couple of playful turtles. Out of nowhere came 4 different schools of Pelagics. We had Yellowtail Kingfish, Mullaway, Spanish Mackerel and Barracuda all come from through from different directions- none less than a metre long. It was like we were in some sort of pelagic superhighway. All this and we were sitting on sand!

The most memorable dive experience is a cray dive I did in the little bay on the far side of Norman island at Wilsons Prom. We were monstered by a 4.5m white pointer that every diver there that day saw, except me. I have never seen 7 divers so keen to get back in a boat. I was so impressed I moved to Qld 6 months later.

Most unusual or amusing diving experience:

Shore Diving at night in Fanny Bay Darwin. After several others noticed a circling tiger shark, we elected to swim back to shore. As a visitor, using borrowed gear, I didn't happen to have on any head protection and in my haste, almost swam headfirst straight into a box Jellyfish. Gingerly moving past it, I made it to shore to start berating my local buddy, who suggested we take the discussion to the car as we were standing on fresh croc tracks. This was a 2 pair of brown speedos job and yet another reason to go boat diving!

Most valued piece of diving equipment: Somebody else's dive boat.

Do you have a dive boat? : Not any more. I had 2 different Inflatables over a 10 year period and I am soo happy to go out on other peoples boats. The old adage of "a boat is hole in the ocean into which you pour money", is very true. As a former boat owner it does annoy the excrement out of me when I see passengers breaking/damaging/losing things on private boats and not giving a Rats Scrotal sac about it. Boats cost money to keep operational. The donation doesn't cover your damage.

If you could dive anywhere in the world, where would you most like to dive? : I am not sure but I have a gut feeling it's not going to be a shore dive.

I guess if I have to put an answer to that question I would pick some more out of the way places off the regular diving beaten track. Places like, The West coast of Tasmania. The 3 Kings off Northern NZ, Volkners Rocks NZ, or Scotland. Anywhere different where I am not being led like a sheep on a guided tour.

Any diving words of wisdom:
Always dive from a boat!

Any other comments: It's
not a race! Dive slow and
look behind you, its where
the fish are.



One Saturday Greg R goes missing while diving. Wife, Jan reports the event, searches fruitlessly and spends a terrible night wondering what could have happened to him.

Next morning there's a knock at the door and she is confronted by two committee members of VSAG.

The PR rep says, 'Jan, we have some news for you, unfortunately some really bad news, but, some good news, and maybe some more good news'.

'Well,' says Jan, 'I guess I'd better have the bad news first.'

JL says, 'I'm really sorry, but GRRR is dead. we found him lying at about 12 metres caught in a little ledge in the reef. We got a line around him and we pulled him up, but he was dead.'

Jan is naturally pretty distressed to hear of this and has a bit of a turn. But after a few minutes she pulls herself together and asks what the good news is.

JL says, 'Well when we got him up there were quite a few really good sized crays and a swag of nice crabs attached to him, so we've brought you your share.' He hands Jan a sugar bag with a couple of nice crays and four or five crabs in it.

'Geez thanks. They're bloody beauties.... so what's the other good news?'

'Well', JL says, 'we are diving in the area again today and between dives we're gonna shoot over to the same spot and pull him up again!'

DIVE REPORT: EX HMAS CANBERRA FFG 02 "O2 WAR CANOE"

The first official VSAG dive onto the EX-HMAS Canberra was well and truly supported by 20 VSAG divers, 5 boats and we enjoyed the company of some guest Getunder divers joining in....20 divers..WOW!

All the boats of Andy Mastrowicz,John Gladding,David Geekie,Dave Kelly and mine were loaded with full crews.

The time slot booked through Parks Victoria was 10am -2pm and after a smooth load up and departure at 8.30 from Sorrento we were on the dive site and ready to dive well ahead of this time. As this was double booking all divers had two dives!

To ensure our divers reached and returned safely from the wreck a line was attached to the cut down mast..this line was attached to the boat tethered to the recreational diver's buoy No4.

Conditions on the Canberra for the first dive were excellent..very little swell and the viz about 15 mtrs.The southerly winds picked up a little later in the morning and the viz reduced slightly but in all still a great dive.

After just 4 months at rest in her new home it is amazing to witness the changes as the artificial reef takes place due to the growth and color which has taken hold, more so externally than inside.

Diving the Canberra is exciting and on my second dive Alex Ivanof and I started at the mast,and then headed to the bridge.Tourism Victoria has a plaque in place just inside the starboard door.VARS has had a very impressive plaque made which will also be located on a stand in the centre of the bridge.

We traveled to the next level communications room,then down another level into the junior sailors mess where the now very famous " Macs Mural" is painted (Printed by Kade Rogers).

Down into the engine room for a quick look see and then up into the passage way between the two helicopter hangers. This passage way is called "Northbourne Avenue" which is one of the main streets in the national capital Canberra.

On the best note all VSAG divers on the Canberra have exercised their own level of diver experience and all diving has been conducted without any incident whatsoever ..a credit to the experience and applied diver safety practices which exists with our club members.

DIVE REPORT: PINNACLES PHILLIP ISLAND 8TH JANUARY 2010

The opportunity to dive the Pinnacles came on quickly with the weather report looking better than brilliant for this Friday and Greg Richards, Ken Methven, Takae Yokoyama, Bridey Oliver and I were available to make up the crew. Alan Storen was coming along but called in from Springvale Road to advise that his car brakes failed and he had to pull out..bugger!!

The boat ramp at Newhaven was busier than boxing day sales at Myer but we eventually got the boat launched and soon on the way down the channel. A good quick run down as there was no swells and the sea was relatively calm.

The site was located easily and the orange buoy deployed right on the top at around 9mtrs. Ken, Takae and Greg kitted up and as I had planned to dive else where the two teams hit the water and I handled the boat.



Happy smiles all round after surfacing however Greg reported that an ocean current was running a bit hard which made parts of the dive challenging...Bridey's BC inflator cap worked loose giving her some anxious moments with buoyancy but experience overcame and major worries.

The next dive was planned as hunter and gatherer and we dived in the big bay just under the southern side of Cape Woolamai...calm conditions and bright sunlight made for easy and relaxed diving.

Some crays were bagged..some missed out.

Back to the ramp and a debrief at the San Remo pub ended another great dive day with a great VSAG team.

JL





The Troubadour



Thoughts and experiences of a VSAG member and diver.



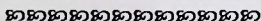
Here's one way to improve buoyancy! Try diving Lake Jindabyne in the Snowy Mountains. Ten divers in 5 tinnies set off to dive on the old town site, which was covered by water when the area was dammed. Visibility was 3 metres down to a depth of 16 metres, after which it became a night dive.



Buoyancy in fresh water is far more sensitive. The very last thing you want to do is touch bottom, stirring a huge muddy froth around everything and everyone. A couple of days of Snowy diving and my buoyancy is way, way better.



Managed to get my altitude diver cert. too!



Had a look at the latest DAN 'Dive Alert' magazine the other day, in particular an article on BCD problems. It covered things like what to do with a stuck inflator? Probably the best/only option is to disconnect the low pressure inflator hose.



Being an integrated weights sort of person (weight belters insert smart comments here!) I remember looking down, on a fairly deep dive, to see my weights slide from the BSD pocket heading for the depths. Fortunately a piece of Velcro and a quick hand grab managed to salvage the situation. Inspection later showed that a stiffening board in the weight purse was broken. This allowed the weights to slip from the pocket and fall away.

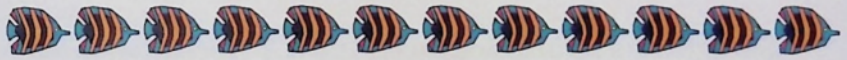




A regular pre-dive inspection would have picked this up.





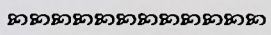
Diving on the NSW South Coast with various operators, I have become quite adept and somewhat aggressive when it comes to assessing a







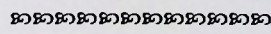
 new buddy. VSAG has a solid set of values and attitudes and this contributes to consistently safe and enjoyable diving. But diving with unknown buddies and various dive operators doesn't breed the same confidence. A few questions about level of certification, experience and what sort of diving is preferred help in the assessment. 



 It also helps to listen for undertones of anti-authority, impulsivity, sense of invulnerability, over-inflated idea of own capability or, alternatively, passiveness (to the extent of following someone into dangerous situations). Read some of the research on this on page 18 of 'Diver Alert'. 





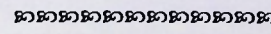
 Having been mostly away from VSAG for a couple of years heightens the stark contrast between then and now. The band of club stalwarts are still around, contributing week in and out. But what a groundswell of new members! Once upon a time filling one boat was sometimes a problem. Now 3-4 boats and around 15 divers seem to occur regularly. 



How exciting is that!





 The immediate treatment for most dive related illnesses and injuries is oxygen. Do you know where the oxygen is and how to use it? 

 On all of my recent dives with VSAG the boat owner has given a briefing on safety issues, equipment etc. This only takes a few minutes and is well worth the time taken. 



 Troubadour is back after an interlude for a couple of years whilst living in Canberra. Those of you who have been to Canberra will know that scuba diving is not a major attraction, so diving has mostly been off the agenda. 

 No scuba, no (real) footy – what's a bloke to do? Back to Melbourne and VSAG I reckon. 



Slaughter at Bari, Southern Italy. 2 December 1943

By Mackenzie Gregory.

Introduction.

Bari was an old city dating back to the Middle Ages, and located on the Adriatic with a population of about 200,000. It had become the main supply base for Montgomery's Eighth Army, plus the new Headquarters for the US 15th. Air Force.

On the 2nd. of December 1943, the port was crowded with 30 Allied ships. One of these, the Liberty ship *John Harvey*, carried a secret load of 100 tons of mustard gas bombs, a precaution in case Hitler decided to invoke the use of chemical warfare. The seeds of the ensuing disaster were planted, merely waiting to germinate.



Chaos at the port of Bari. The German raid closed the port for three weeks*

The Port of Bari, all hustle and bustle.

Absorbed with the task of bringing the US 15th. Air Force into reality, with Major General James Doolittle in command, the Allies gave little thought to a German air raid on the bustling port of Bari. The harbour was crammed with shipping, stuffed with supplies, including aviation fuel for the US bombers crowding the Foggia air base 75 miles away.

Come sunset, on the evening of the 2nd. of December in 1943, with the urgent need to hasten the unloading of ships filling the port, the harbour was brilliantly lit so that cargo might be unloaded throughout the night.

German reconnaissance flight during the afternoon of the 2nd. of December 1943.
1st. Lieutenant Werner Hahn had flown his Messerschmidt ME-210 over Bari at 23,000 feet on the afternoon of the 2nd. of December 1943. Unmolested by any AA fire, he made a second pass of the port, and turned North for home, to report that the proposed target was crowded with unloading ships, perhaps 30 plus.

Field Marshal Wolfram von Richthofen, in command of Luftflotte 2, had suggested to his boss, Field Marshal Kesselring, that an attack on Bari could slow down the advancing 8th. Army, and retard attacks from the newly arrived US 15th. Air Force.

He thought he might manage to gather 150 JU 88's for the attack, in the event, 105 was all he could muster. His aircraft were ordered to fly east to the Adriatic, then turn and approach Bari to the west, the Allies no doubt would anticipate any German air raids to come in from the North. The aircraft would drop Duppel, thin strips of tin foil to confuse the defensive Radar. Parachute flares would be dropped to light up the targets in the harbour at about 1930 (7.30 PM ,) then the JU 88's, would attack at a low altitude, hoping to avoid Allied Radar installations.



German JU 88, used in the raid on Bari*

Mustard gas in Liberty Ship SS John Harvey.

The Captain of John Harvey was not officially informed that his ship would carry a load of lethal mustard gas bombs. These were 4 feet long, 8 inches in diameter, and each held 60/70 pounds of the chemical.

Mustard gas forms blisters, irritates the respiratory system, leaving the skin burnt, with raw ulcers.

Post WW2, in the Royal Australian Navy, I was undertaking an Atomic, Biological, Chemical, Damage Control course at a Sydney Naval Establishment, during which I was instructed how to combat the effects of mustard gas. Some of this deadly chemical was introduced onto the back of my hands, I was certainly pleased I had paid attention on how to nullify it working, as I diligently scrubbed it off my hands to negate any ill effects of this awful weapon of war. Fortunately I was successful.

DIVING INTO THE PAST: AN ARTICLE BY DES WILLIAMS

Diving into the Past goes all the way back to an article which appeared in the April 1985 edition of Fathoms written by Des Williams.

This is the story of mystery, murder, fate and if you believe...ghosts!!! Please read on.
JL

s.s. "KOOMBANA" & THE ROSEATE PEARL

by Des Williams

S.S. Koombana was owned by the Adelaide Steamship Company. She was 7499 tons and built in Glasgow in 1909. On the 20th March, 1912 she left Port Hedland in Western Australia for Broome with 166 passengers and crew, and shortly afterwards encountered a cyclone of great force, in which she disappeared without a trace.

In 1973 the remains of what appeared to be a large vessel were located in deep water about 35 kilometers off the coast, but were not positively identified.

Recently, an R.A.A.F. reconnaissance aircraft has discovered an anomaly in the area where the ship was thought to have gone down and the Navy is to investigate. This has further added up hope that one of Australia's greatest maritime mysteries may be solved. And I may also solve the fate of one of the finest pearls ever to be fished from the azure waters of Britain's pearling beds.

The north west coast has always been alive with the history and legends of fabulous pearls, but none has been more discussed or argued about than the fabulous Roseate pearl taken from the waters off the 80 mile beach by an unknown diver in 1905.

It was said to be finer than the magnificent Star of the West taken from White Creek just north of Broome (W.A.), and it was valued then at £20,000. But, the legends say the pearl, known simply as Roseate, was cursed, and its short life in human hands was responsible for the violent deaths of seven men until it was returned to the sea.

The final owner, a pearl buyer, Abraham Davis, was among the 156 passengers aboard the Koombana when it sailed into oblivion in March 1912, and legend has it the pearl went with him.

The story of the Roseate pearl began in 1905 when a Filipino diver, Casilio Toledo was fishing off the 80 mile beach. Sharing the poor beach was another lugger from the south and eventually its master rowed to Toledo's lugger in a state of high excitement. This showed Toledo a magnificent pearl and eventually the Filipino diver decided it would be his, whilst the master slept off a monumental binge, Toledo stole the