



# FATHOMS

DECEMBER 2011 – JANUARY 2012



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Photos: Mark Santa Maria, Galapagos Islands, August 2011.

# FATHOMS

*Official Journal of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group*



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## **VSAG General Meetings**

3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday in the month  
Meeting starts at 8.00 pm  
(Dinner starts from 7.00 pm)

Maori Chief Hotel  
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South Melbourne VIC 3205  
Melway: 1D L11

## **Editorial Submissions:**

Email to editor@vsag.org.au

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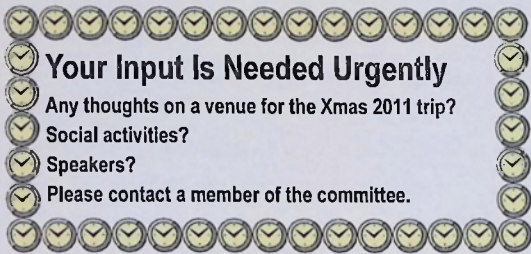
## Xmas Opportunity not to be missed!

I am looking for a few divers who may be interested in exploring the coast between Beachport and Robe in a diving expedition exploring the many reefs that are close to the shore and may never or rarely been dived before. Most of this area is national park and 4WD beach driving along with camping is allowed. It also faces the Southern Ocean and is therefore very exposed.

I would like to hear from anyone interested in beach driving and camping with a 4WD who can go sometime over the next summer and is available on reasonably short notice after a favourable forecast. I have had a short taste of this coast and it looks spectacular and full of expectations for a great adventure that we as Australians can enjoy. The finer points of tank fills, boat access etc. can be worked out if I have enough interest.

Peter Briggs

pcbriggs@bigpond.net.au mobile 0412 585 546



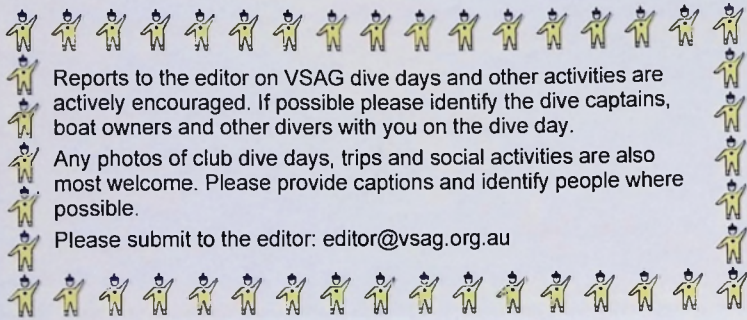
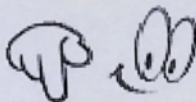
## Your Input Is Needed Urgently

Any thoughts on a venue for the Xmas 2011 trip?

Social activities?

Speakers?

Please contact a member of the committee.



Reports to the editor on VSAG dive days and other activities are actively encouraged. If possible please identify the dive captains, boat owners and other divers with you on the dive day.

Any photos of club dive days, trips and social activities are also most welcome. Please provide captions and identify people where possible.

Please submit to the editor: [editor@vsag.org.au](mailto:editor@vsag.org.au)

# Editorial

## Thank you Alan Storen

After the amazing effort of creating and publishing nearly 60 editions, Alan Storen has stepped down as Editor of Fathoms. We all owe him eternal thanks for this valuable contribution to VSAG members over so many years. Ably assisted by Jude, this great team made sure we always had something interesting and informative to read every two months. It's a tough act to follow.

## New Editorial Team

Yes, the baton has been passed and the honour and obligations of being Editor of Fathoms has passed to yours truly. Thankfully, Cheryl Lees has agreed to assist, and Alan Storen will remain on call to come to the rescue should any major issues arise.

I've been involved as editor and publisher of a few magazines over the years, so I'm well aware of what I'm in for. Naturally, I have a few ideas as to changes I'd like to make to the presentation and distribution of Fathoms. How about you?

## Fathoms is your magazine

This is your magazine. It's highly valued contents have always been provided by your fellow members. Dive reports, trip reports, tales of exciting adventures, safe-

ty tips and even news from the world of local, national and international diving. More often than not, written in a down to earth way, and interspersed with great humour. So let's keep that going.

But what else would you like to see in Fathoms? The new editorial team would certainly welcome any suggestions. But don't be surprised if we also ask you to help implement them. :-)

## Fathoms Distribution

The biggest change we'll be looking into (don't you just hate it when politicians say they're "looking into" something) will be in the way Fathoms is distributed. It's a topic that's been on the agenda for quite a while, and it's vitally important when you recognise that the printing and mailing of Fathoms is VSAG's largest ongoing operational cost.

We're looking into also making Fathoms available via email and/or online. That way, everyone can have a full colour edition and we can save the club some money. We might also be able to make back issues available online as well, thus creating a valuable library accessible to members new and old.

*Best Regards, Lloyd Borrett. ❖*



# VSAG Committee 2011-2012

New 2011-2012



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VSAG Committee meets at 8.00 pm every 2nd Thursday of the month (except in January)

All Members Welcome

Maori Chief Hotel, 117 Moray St, South Melbourne

# The President's Communiqué

by *David Geekie*

Those divers who prefer to avoid the winter chill can be assured that diving conditions are improving rapidly — last weekend our divers could distinguish the bottom at 20 m from the surface on the flood slack off Queenscliff. Once on the bottom we were all amazed at the number and variety of fish — the best I have seen for some time. Today (13<sup>th</sup> November) the EBB slack was so clear that our diving partner Alan Beckhurst also could see the bottom at 16 m from the surface. So pull out your gear, have it checked over and prepare for some great diving.

VSAG is now well positioned with boats so we should be able to find spots for all divers wishing to dive either from Sorrento or Queenscliff. Over winter we have struggled to find divers to crew boats, hopefully the warmer weather and water will fix this.

The Christmas party on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup>

December is rapidly approaching but few members have made a commitment. This has always been a great time to catch up with old diving buddies. At the same time the generosity of the prize givers has ensured the event raffles provide a great opportunity to raise funds for the club, enabling us to purchase more gear to improve our diving offering. Last year we invested in 3 new Oxygen kits, one of which will be stored at The SCUBA Doctor dive shop in Rye so anyone from the club can take it with them while diving.

Please book in soon for this fantastic event and bring along the family.

Over Christmas there is no official VSAG trip away so there will be boats and divers looking for opportunities to dive in Melbourne. Watch for emails from divers looking for buddies or contact Lloyd Borrett, John Lawler, Graham Ellis, Mick Kakafikas or myself to keep up to date with dive planning. ❖



# Christmas Party



**VSAG President David Geekie and the Committee extend an invitation to members and friends to come and celebrate the festive season with your fellow VSAG members and their families.**

When:

12 noon to 5 pm

Saturday, 10 December 2011

Where:

**Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron**

Foreshore, Beach Road

(between Cromer Rd & Hutchison Ave)

Beaumaris VIC 3193

Join us right on the shores of beautiful Beaumaris Bay for the biggest VSAG social event of the year.

For new members who have not been to BMYS, all chairs, tables, toilets, knives, forks, plates etc. are provided. Sun screen and a hat would be good idea.

If the weather is bad we will move into the downstairs bar room which is spacious and modern.

*John Lawler has already been busy catching some glorious snapper to be included in the Xmas Party Prizes. If you win one, he'll also provide you with his secret recipe and cooking instructions to ensure you have a fine meal. Yummmmmmmmm.*

## MEGA Prizes, MEGA Fun

The VSAG Christmas raffle tradition continues. Yet again there will be a vast assortment of excellent prizes donated by friendly dive industry businesses and VSAG members.

## Catering

Catering will be done by members of the VSAG Committee. Yes, you can expect another magnificent spread. If you can help out, please contact John Lawler (see page 6 for contact details).

Drinks will be at bar prices. **No BYO.**

## Price

**The cost per person is just \$25.**

(Children free.)

Payments to Peter Briggs ASAP. ❖





# Safety In Diving

## Diver Education Course

by David Geekie, VSAG

I have been diving since '76 when I received my open water certificate with FAUI. Since then I have picked up Nitrox for use on dive trips, but under many regimes I would be considered unqualified to do many of the dives I regularly plan and execute. Observing some of the more technically qualified divers (particularly in Getunder), I also feel I could make some improvements in my gear setup.

As a result I have had some discussions with Karl from Dive Experience with regard to a combination course covering elements of Deep, Solo, Advanced Nitrox and overhead obstruction diving. We have yet to discuss pricing and timing as

this would be contingent on whether others would be interested in joining me on the course.

One of the reasons I started this conversation with Dive Experience is that reading the DEEP manual revealed only one 'fact' that I was not already aware of. If I do a course I want to be guaranteed that I will be a better diver as a result and I feel that a course designed around our particular needs as relatively experienced divers without many qualifications will deliver this.

If you would be interested in participating in such a course would you please let me know. Or, if you have alternative suggestions then please contact me to discuss this.

*David Geekie*

M: 0419 300 686

E: [dgeekie@bigpond.net.au](mailto:dgeekie@bigpond.net.au) ❖



*The incredible Magdeburg Water Bridge in Germany creates a river over a river.*

# How to use less air while scuba diving

by John Lawler, VSAG

Novice scuba divers tend to use up a lot of air. This can mean that the dive has to end earlier than it should and spoil the fun somewhat for other divers too. Here are some easy to remember tips in order to cut your air consumption safely in those initial dives.

**Do relax.** Number one reason for too much oxygen use is heavy breathing due to anxiety. Keep your breathing steady, focus on what you are doing and talk your own mental confidence up.

**Don't overwork.** Are you trying too hard? Again relax, go with the flow and you may find it requires a lot less effort to swim around than you thought it would. You have flippers and a buoyancy jacket to help you to take it easy. Do you have to swim within millimetres of everything you see? Or can you in fact scrutinise a lot of interesting undersea life from your present position?

**Do not misuse your fins.** Learn from more experienced divers how to use your swim fins effectively. Keep that technique in mind when swimming. Efficiency means more spare air.

**Get your buoyancy right.** Everything will come more easily after this is in place. Stop finning and check to see if you swim or sink, you should be doing neither. Get your dive buddy to have a

look in order to see if you are horizontal, as being so reduces drag and improves efficiency.

**Use your snorkel.** While on the surface there is no need to waste precious tank air.

**Do not swim using your arms.** Your legs are much more powerful and energy efficient, particularly given the obstructions caused by your diving gear.

**Use currents to your advantage.** When they are working against you, hug the seabed and stick close to rocks and other undersea objects. When you wish to swim in the same direction as a current, move into it.

**Get yourself fit.** Your general fitness level impinges on the amount of oxygen you need to complete any physical activity. Working out on dry land or in a pool can really improve your performance in scuba diving.

**Use your buoyancy control intelligently.** To ascend or descend fill or let air out of your stab jacket. This is much more energy efficient than finning up and down.

**Never hold your breath.** Do not engage in the controversial practice of skip breathing (missing alternate breaths by holding them in). Apart from being lethally dangerous there is evidence that such practices simply do not work and use up more oxygen in the end. ❖

## VSAG dive equipment box

by John Lawler, VSAG

VSAG now has a private transient equipment box located at The Scuba Doctor dive shop, 1/49 Peninsula Avenue, Rye VIC 3941.

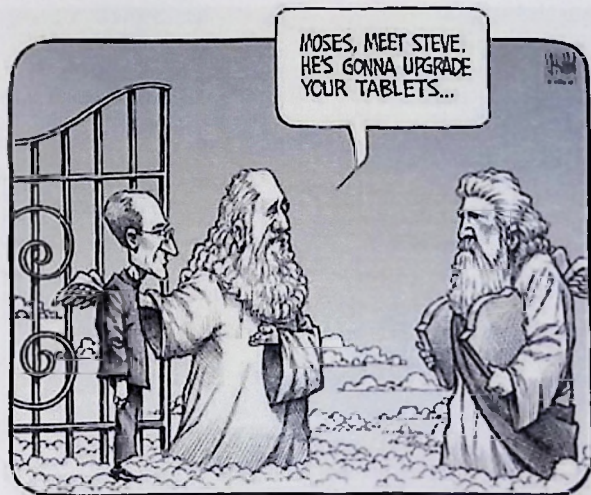
Some equipment that is not in-use by VSAG divers and boat owners can now be held in our black storage box. Having an accessible location for such stuff means we no longer have to rely on equipment being passed around between members.

Right now there is a paid annual parking ticket for Mornington Peninsula boat ramps, plus one full Oxyviva Oxygen kit, in the equipment box.

Anyone who can make use of either of these items can show up at The Scuba Doctor and ask Peter Fear or Hannah to direct you to the VSAG equipment box.

If you take items from the box, it's imperative that you also return them at day's end.

If a member wants to leave anything for other divers before or after a dive day, the equipment box is there to do that as well. ❖



# Prepare your boat for the drive

by Mike Halligan, Southport BSAC

*We prepare ourselves and our kit for the dive, how do we prepare the car and boat for the drive?*

## Secure your boat

Everything inside the boat should be strapped down. The wind inside a boat at highway speeds will lift most things out, onto the carriageway.

Check that fittings are secure and that they will not free themselves in transit – aerials, radar reflectors, EPIRBs and fire extinguishers are common casualties.

They make interesting diversions for drivers following you, loosening progressively until they fall off.

Make sure that the protruding outboard engine is securely bagged in day-glow to warn pedestrians as much as following motorists.

## Secure your trailer

The winch draws the boat forward onto its trailer, it does not hold it down.

Properly designed and mounted, it exerts no downward force. Do not use a winch to hold the boat on the trailer.

Boaters often pass a webbing strap over the boat near the stern and tie down at each side of the trailer. This will not hold the boat onto the trailer either and can, if over-tightened, damage the hull. However, a strap that appears to be holding the whole boat onto the trailer does seem to impress other motorists more than a cou-

ple of tie-downs acting on the transom, so don't be deterred from this. Make sure you do tie the boat down securely using correct fittings (the D rings on the transom and painter eye in the bow) then add whatever cosmetic bits you wish.

Load the boat and trailer to produce the correct nose-weight. Bear in mind this is a fibreglass boat you're loading, not a builder's skip. Do not overload the boat whatever the temptation. A cracked hull or a broken trailer will severely upset your day.

## Secure your 'train'

When you're happy that the boat is secure on its trailer and that its contents are secured to it, it is time to join tow car and trailer together. First, make sure all tyre pressures including spares are correct then make sure that both tow car and trailer remain level when joined.

Nose-weight should be 5–8% of the weight of the trailer, say 50–80kg and never less than 25kg. This is like carrying an additional passenger a metre behind the back seats so be careful when loading the car. Your tow-ball should ride high enough to produce this even when linked to a twin-axel trailer.

Don't set off if you've compromised your car's steering, braking, front lights and maybe drive as well by overloading the rear and lifting the front wheels. Do what is necessary with spring-assisters and drop plate to keep car and trailer straight and level, yet with adequate nose-weight. If you're not sure, look in the first shop window you pass. That will

show you whether your nose is in the air. Once the tow-hitch is securely locked onto the tow-ball, plug in the electrics and mount the snatch coupling for the trailer brakes to a different part of the tow car. Don't slip the snatch chain (or cable) round the tow-ball, because from there it will not apply the trailer brakes should the tow-ball fail. (They do!) The swan-neck is a common point of failure.

Mount the back-up coupling elsewhere on the car so it stops the trailer should it become detached. Can you claim to have exercised due care if the trailer brake is not applied and your boat takes off alone?

Now check all your electrics. Every light on the trailer board should replicate that on the car, both indicators, hazards, lights (front and rear if fitted), number plate, brakes, fog.

Do not park a trailer on the road at night unless it is attached to the tow car. You may wish to detach the hitch and give your suspension a rest, but don't forget to re-couple next morning!

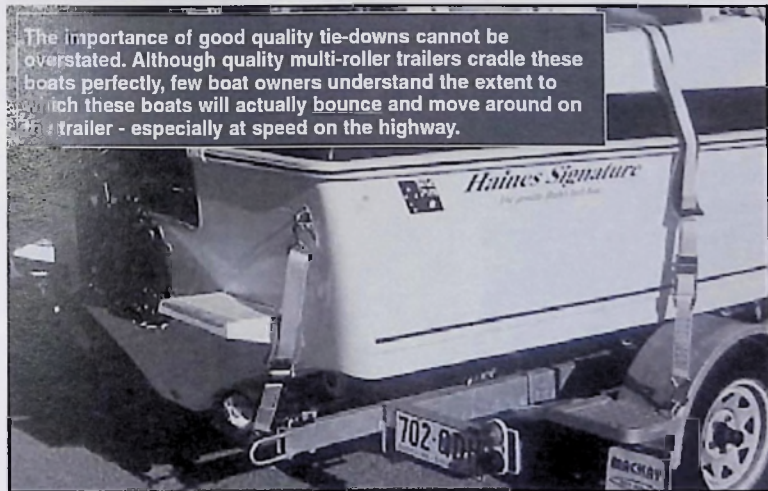
### Rules of the road

Be sure you know your speed limits.

Remember, that a safe stopping distance for your car when solo is nothing like safe when dragging a ton or more behind you.

If you have any obstruction to your mirrors, then fit extended mirrors to remedy this before you set off. Don't wait for the near-miss that shows you don't have clear rear-ward vision.

Then, having arrived at the dive site safe and well, enjoy your dives and be sure to return home safely as well. ❖



The importance of good quality tie-downs cannot be overstated. Although quality multi-roller trailers cradle these boats perfectly, few boat owners understand the extent to which these boats will actually bounce and move around on the trailer - especially at speed on the highway.