



Fathoms

AUGUST 2012 – SEPTEMBER 2012

The diver who saved Winchester Cathedral

Mike Letch: Freedom in the ocean

Safety in diving: Still a long way to go

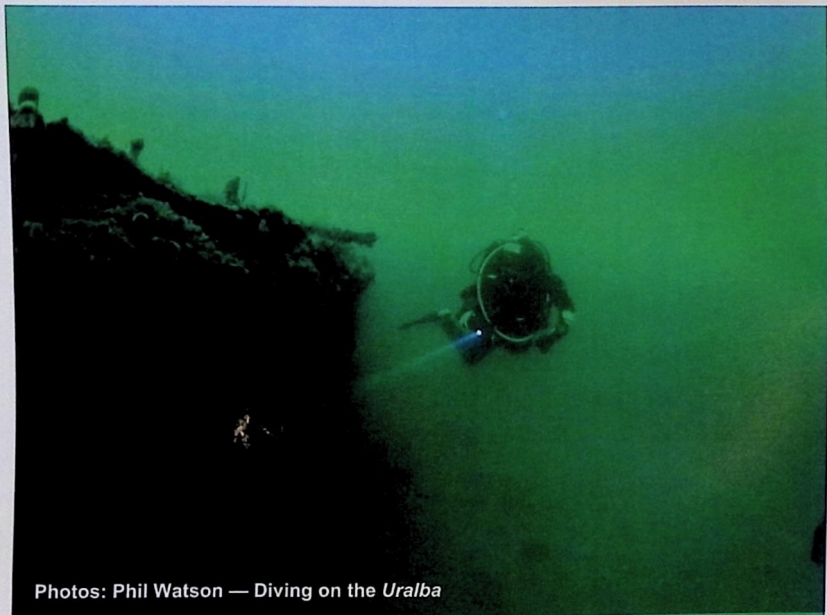
Avoiding decompression sickness when diving

Diving the Uralba wreck

Diving at Phuket, Thailand

Postal Address:
VSAG, 15 Regal Ct, Vermont South VIC 3133

editor@vsag.org.au
www.vsg.org.au



Photos: Phil Watson — Diving on the *Uralba*





Fathoms

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In this August 2012 – September 2012 issue...

Article	Author	Page
Notices		4
Editorial	Lloyd Borrett	5
VSAG Committee 2011–2012		6
VSAG committee news	Lloyd Borrett	7
DAN A-P: Still a Long Way to Go	John Lippmann	8–10
Avoiding Decompression Sickness When Diving	TDI/SDI	10–11
Meeting reports: June and July 2012	Lloyd Borrett	12–13
Dive report: Diving Top End Port Philip Bay Wrecks	John Lawler et al.	14–17
Dive report: Uralba Wreck Dive Report	Michael Mallis	18–21
Dive report: Night Dive on The Pinnacle	Phil Watson	22–23
Dive report: Nudie Reef and North Wall	Des Williams	24–25
Dive report: VSAG Dive Day in Port Philip Bay	Phil Watson	26–27
Dive report: VSAGers go diving midweek	Lloyd Borrett	28–29
Dive report: Another take on the day	John Lawler	29–30
Dive report: Shore Diving	John Lawler	31
Trip report: Planes, Ships & Automobiles	John Mills	32–37
Trip report: Phuket, Thailand	Adam Borge	38–41
Diving the web	Lloyd Borrett	42–43
Member Profile: Phil Watson	Phil Watson	44
Nomination for Committee form		45
Emergency contact information		46
Tidal streams at the heads: August 2012 to October 2012	Graham Ellis	47–49
VSAG dive and meeting calendar	Graham Ellis	50

VSAG General Meetings

3rd Thursday in the month Maori Chief Hotel
Meeting starts at 8.00 pm 117 Moray Street (corner York Street)
(Dinner starts from 7.00 pm) South Melbourne VIC 3205
Melway: 1D L11

Editorial Submissions:

Email to editor@vsag.org.au

Lloyd Borrett M: 0418 170 044

Cheryl Lees M: 0448 863 455

14 Sheoak Road, Frankston South VIC 3199

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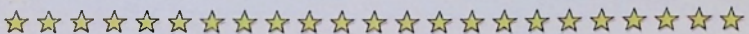


VSAG AGM: 20 September 2012

We have the VSAG AGM coming up at 8.00 pm on 20 September 2012 at The Maori Chief hotel in South Melbourne. Come along and participate in your club, plus have fun as the various award presentations are made: Club Member of the Year, Literary Award, Editor's Award, Weight Belt Award.

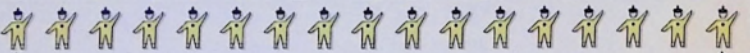
Agenda Items/Motions: If you have items/motions you'd like to add to the AGM agenda, please submit them (with seconder) by 24 August 2012. Please send them to the Secretary, Alan Storen, by email to secretary@vsag.org.au, or by post to 15 Regal Court, Vermont South VIC 3133.

Committee Nominations: Included with this edition of Fathoms on page 45, you'll find a "Nomination for Committee" form. If you'd like to help out on the VSAG committee, please complete the form and return it to any member of the committee before 1 September 2012. We have at least two spare spots.



VSAG Dive Equipment Box

VSAG now has a private transient equipment box located at The Scuba Doctor dive shop, 1/49 Peninsula Avenue, Rye VIC 3941. Equipment that is not in-use by VSAG divers and boat owners can now be held in our black storage box. Currently: 2 x Oxygen kits, 1 x DAN first aid kit, plus 1 x Boat Ramp Permit. Please use this facility responsibly. ❖



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. ❖



Editorial



Yippee! We've been diving! It was a great feeling as Cheryl and I finally got underwater again on a VSAG mid-week dive day during the school holidays (see page 28 for the dive report).

But plenty of other VSAGers have been getting wet as well. This edition of *Fathoms* is full to the brim with fantastic dive day reports (starting on page 14) and dive trip reports (starting on page 32). Many thanks to all of the various contributors and to the photographers for their pics.

Plus we had fantastic presentations by Des Williams and Mike Letch at the June and July meetings respectively. (See pages 12 and 13 for the meeting reports.)

Mike Letch, through his achievement in the face of adversity and his positive outlook to life, is a true inspiration for us all. Mike last visited VSAG in 2007 and in his subsequent meeting report Greg Richards sincerely wrote, "If another World War breaks out, I want this bloke in the trenches next to me!"

The human form underwater

There are two key points underwater photographers always take notice of: lighting and composition of the subject. Big or small, if neither is orchestrated properly, the end result is... well, less than impressive. While many strive to capture these

various elements in the wild, others look to combine them, dictated by being underwater with the human form.

Few do this well. But this is where Jeff Hartog's underwater photographic skills come in. While he is a noted plastic surgeon by profession, Jeff's artistry, created in a studio of his own design, is certainly attention grabbing and gaining popularity amongst those who appreciate the true creative mind.

See a couple of Jeff's photos on the inside back cover of this edition.

Share your confessions

Wow! When I think about how far Cheryl and I have come with *Fathoms* in just a short time, I'm dazzled. I think this edition of *Fathoms* is truly "our best yet!"

Still, we are always trying to come up with new ideas for *Fathoms*, and ideas for items you could contribute. So here's another one.

Do you have an underwater adventure or misadventure you'd like to share? Send us a story from your past and we promise we won't judge, but instead publish it as a logbook confessional.

Best Regards, Lloyd Borrett. ❖

VSAG Committee 2011-2012



New 2011-2012

President / SDFV Representative

David Geekie

145 Johnston St, Newport VIC 3015
0419 300 686

president@vsag.au.au
dgeekie@bigpond.net.au

Vice President / SDFV Representative / Point Scorer

Greg Richards

5 Oakhurst Court, Frankston VIC 3199
03 9783 4249 (H)

vicepresident@vsag.or.au
jrichards1@hotmail.net.au

Secretary

Alan Storen

15 Regal Court, Vermont South VIC 3133
03 9803 3573 (H) 0417 017 446

secretary@vsag.org.au
storens@bigpond.net.au

Treasurer

Peter Briggs

37 Bluc Ridge Dr, Mooroolbark VIC 3138
03 9727 3947 0412 585 546

treasurer@vsag.or.au
pebriggs@bigpond.net.au

Internal Auditor

Andy Mastrowicz

224 Wattle Valley Rd, Camberwell VIC 3124
03 9809 0984 (H) 0402 060 711

amastrow@gmail.com

Dive Calendar Coordinator

Graham Ellis

2A View Rd, Glen Waverley VIC 3150
03 9803 0069 0412 100 067

graham_ellis@optusnet.com.au

Property/Equipment Officer

Michael Kakafikas

16 Goodwood Cres, Gladstone Park VIC 3043
03 9338 1996 0439 044 122

didgipuss@hotmail.com

Social Secretary / New Member Coordinator

John Lawler

7 Cloris Ave, Beaumaris VIC 3193
03 9589 4020 (H) 0414 922 916

socialsecretary@vsag.org.au
jlawler@aapt.net.au

Webmaster / Newsletter Editor

Lloyd Borrett

14 Sheoak Road, Frankston South VIC 3199
03 5904 9005 (H) 0418 170 044

editor@vsag.org.au
lloyd@borrett.id.au

Assistant Newsletter Editor / Assistant Social Secretary

Cheryl Lees

14 Sheoak Road, Frankston South VIC 3199
03 5904 9005 (H) 0448 863 455

editor@vsag.org.au
cheryl_marj@hotmail.com

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 VIC 3205

VSAG committee news

The following is a summary of main points raised at the June and July 2012 committee meetings.

- The new Oxygen kit is now deployed. It's usual place of residence for now is the VSAG dive equipment box at The Scuba Doctor in Rye.
- The VSAG 60th Anniversary celebration project is now well underway with John Lawler managing the project. Volunteers to assist on a working group should contact JL.
- Anyone wanting to go to The Prom for the Melbourne Cup weekend should contact Greg Richards ASAP.

- As of the July committee meeting we only had **41 financial members**, plus our 14 life members. So could everyone who doesn't want to become a non-member please pay their membership fee as soon as possible.
- Cash reserves of the club as at 12 July 2012 were \$13,338.20.

VSAG welcomes Michael Sesin

An application for membership from Michael Sesin was approved by the committee in June 2012. Would all members please extend their welcome to Michael and help him settle into VSAG's unique culture. ❖



VSAG member contact details

We'd like to update our records with the current contact details, including emergency contact details, for all VSAG members.

Could you please visit the web page <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/S183106EC2> or <http://bit.ly/L86Rx1>

and complete the online form found there.

We require one submission per VSAG member. This means we require a separate submission for each person on a family membership.

This information will assist dive captains to better organise dive days and handle any emergencies. ❖



Safety In Diving

Still a Long Way to Go

by John Lippmann OAM, DAN Asia-Pacific Executive Director



DAN's mission is to improve the safety of all divers and we routinely receive calls about divers who are not DAN Members. DAN tries to assist with such

cases, although we cannot provide the same level of assistance as for Members because we are unable to authorise the transportation or treatment, or cover any of the costs involved, in the management of these divers.

Recently DAN AP was contacted about two very serious diving accidents involving divers who were not members. These cases highlighted some all-too-common problems:— *delayed and inadequate provision of high concentration oxygen, and extended delay to evacuation to a suitable treatment facility.*

The first accident involved a man who was diving in a remote part of Papua New Guinea. Immediately after surfacing from a dive he became short of breath with chest pains, coughing and impaired consciousness. The divemaster called the DAN DES hotline and the doctor advised that the diver was likely to be suffering

from very severe decompression illness (DCI) and needed immediate high concentration oxygen first aid and rapid evacuation to a recompression chamber.

There was no oxygen available on the boat and the oxygen provided on reaching land some 20 minutes later was only a relatively low concentration. I spoke to the divemaster and then contacted the nearest chamber facility and linked the diving doctor and possible evacuation provider with the victim's companions.

He was taken to a basic clinic and, because he was uninsured, was not evacuated to a chamber until around 30 hours later, after some very extensive negotiations. On arrival at the chamber he was in a very poor condition and the doctor later stated that he was unsure if the diver would survive. However, this diver was extremely fortunate and had a better than expected recovery after extensive (and expensive) treatment.

The second accident involved a 14-year-old boy who was on a brief diving trip with his father in Malaysia. After surfacing from the first dive, he mentioned that he had been sneezing underwater and that he now had an itchy feeling in his chest. Nothing was visible and he felt otherwise fine, so, after a relatively short surface interval, he dived again. The dive appeared uneventful until at the safety stop when the divemaster noticed that the boy was becoming unconscious so took him to the surface where he was quickly

brought on board the boat. He was in and out of consciousness and was having seizures. Unfortunately, as in the previous case, no immediate oxygen first aid was available on the boat.

Oxygen provision was commenced by the dive operator on reaching shore some 10-15 minutes later and there are conflicting reports whether an appropriate delivery system was used. An ambulance arrived and took him to a local hospital but the doctors at the hospital had no knowledge of how to manage diving accidents. As a result they failed to realise that the diver probably had a cerebral arterial gas embolism (an air bubble in his brain) and required the immediate administration of 100 percent oxygen and rapid transfer to a recompression chamber.

He was transferred to another hospital and assessed by other doctors, again without training in dive medicine, and they were also unable to diagnose the problem. A Navy dive doctor who was eventually consulted diagnosed the likely problem and investigated whether the diver could be taken to the nearest chamber. However, he was concerned that the young diver was too ill to be placed inside this chamber and further delays ensued while a more suitable chamber was sought.

The father's travel insurer was contacted but only elevated the urgency of the case after a DAN hotline was finally called some nine hours after the dive. An urgent evacuation to Singapore advised.

Further extensive delays occurred before the evacuation team arrived to pick up the patient. Throughout this time he was only given low concentration oxygen and continued to deteriorate due to progressive brain damage from the poorly-treated injury.

By the time he arrived at the chamber, around 32 hours after the dive, it was too late for the subsequent recompression to be effective. Tragically, he died several days later.

Had this diver been a DAN Member and had we been called by the dive operator, the hospital or a companion soon after the accident, we would have advised the medical staff about appropriate oxygen administration and other management, and we would have immediately sought to arrange an evacuation. One can never be certain, however, given the location and some of the facilities available, we are reasonably confident that the evacuation could have occurred that day and that this accident might have had a better outcome.

Personally, I have been deeply touched by this case and have become involved in its aftermath in the hope of reducing the likelihood of similar occurrences. It shows that, despite all of our efforts, DAN has a long way to go in increasing divers' awareness of our existence and the benefits of being a DAN Member.

We also need to continue to urge dive operators to have appropriate oxygen equipment *at the dive site* and to encour-

age divers to insist on this. Finally, we need to continue to better educate divers, dive professionals, and the non-diving medical community of the existence and benefits of DAN, and to promptly contact a DAN hotline in the event of diving accident.

I have recently met with some of the doctors involved in this case and DAN AP will be re-doubling our efforts to disseminate information about the management of dive accidents to medical facilities in that area, and well beyond. Please ask your diving friends to join DAN. In addition to providing direct benefits to them, it will provide additional funds to help in our mission to improve diving safety for all of us.

Let's make something good come from this terrible accident.

Safe diving.

Divers Alert Network Asia-Pacific

As a diver, it's important to be prepared for unexpected diving accidents/illnesses. Being a Member of the Divers Alert Network (DAN) means that wherever you live or dive around the world you have peace of mind knowing that DAN is available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week to assist in the event of an accident/illness. DAN provides Members with Worldwide Emergency Evacuation Coverage and offers optional Dive Injury (Treatment) Insurance. DAN coverage really is as essential as your mask, fins and air! www.danasiapacific.org ❖

Avoiding Decompression Sickness When Diving

by TDI/SDI.

Diving is perhaps one of the most fascinating sports. Unlike many other sports, which have been studied allowing us to know how it will affect the human body, scuba diving relies on theory, theories that have worked for many years but never the less — theories. To say that even the most studied experts in our field know exactly what is going to happen to a given diver for a given dive would be a bit of a stretch. The topic most commonly discussed or debated is Decompression Sickness (DCS) and how to avoid it.

The first thing to be clear on is, thousands of dives are conducted every year, ranging from a shallow dive along a reef in 10 m (30 ft) of water to exploring a deep shipwreck in 100 m (300 ft), and they are completed without incident. Just looking at the depths and conditions it is easy to see the vast differences in these dive profiles. Factor in some other variables such as: age, health, PFO, hydration and we have a very complex situation. This still begs the question; how do we reduce the chances of DCS?

Over the years divers have implemented many strategies to decrease the odds of Decompression Sickness. Here is a short list of possibilities:

- Deep stops

- Slower ascent rates
- Staying well hydrated
- Not drinking alcohol
- Avoiding caffeine
- Using helium based breathing gasses for all phases of the dive

While every one of the above certainly cannot hurt, there is no silver bullet to avoiding DCS.

The vast majority of divers only dive once or twice a year. What's more, these divers tend to 'binge' dive, meaning they do 25 plus dives in a week on the wrecks in Truk Lagoon. They are commonly on holidays during this time, and while diving is their primary goal, they are also enjoying the down time and celebrating while not in the water. One more important factor is, these holidays are taken during colder months at their home location. Thus, exposure to sun is limited, which results in more than just a sunburn — it also increases dehydration, along with the celebrating of course.

In the past ten plus years, decompression planning software has come a long way and now most programs and dive computers give the user the ability to set their conservatism level. While most of the time divers tend to set conservatism based on personal preference, they should also be considering environmental conditions and their own anxiety levels. Divers should follow this basic rule: if the dive is going to be challenging due to water temperature, visibility or current, or if



this is a new dive and you are nervous, plan the dive using a higher conservatism setting.

The best piece of advice would be to listen to your body and dive conservatively. If you feel like you are getting run down or something doesn't feel right, take a dive off. This advice applies to all divers, not just the holiday makers.

Diving is supposed to be a fun and enjoyable sport, not an endurance or competitive one. Too much exercise during, between or after dives is not a good thing. Enjoy those surface intervals; share your pictures, download your video or just pass the time with some dive buddies and relax. When you feel up to it, make the next dive and it will be that much more enjoyable.

DCS is a part of diving. But if you add in a little conservatism to your dives and pay attention to how you feel, the odds are in your favour. Enjoy your passion and get out and dive! ❖

Meeting Reports

Thursday, 21 June 2012

The Diver Who Saved Winchester Cathedral

We were joined at the June 2012 meeting by VSAG life member Des Williams, who is also active in The Historical Diving Society SE Asia & Pacific (www.classicdiver.org). Des gave an insightful presentation about the diver who saved Winchester Cathedral.

In 1905 a team of about 150 workmen set out to deal with the problematic Cathedral foundations once and for all. The current wooden foundations were rotting away beneath the Cathedral and part of the building was beginning to subside into the peat bog on which it was built.

William Walker, a Portsmouth dockyard diver, toiled in darkness below the walls of the Cathedral for nearly six years in order to replace the foundations.

Known as 'Diver Bill' he was employed to descend into the murky water of 235 pits, each about 6 m deep, to temporarily shore up the walls by putting concrete underneath them.

He supporting the cathedral using more than 25,000 bags of concrete, 115,000 concrete blocks and 900,000 bricks. ❖



THE DIVER AT WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL

Thursday, 19 July 2012

Freedom in the Ocean

We were joined at the July 2012 meeting by Mike Letch, a T6 paraplegic, founder of the Disabled Divers Association (DDA), and recipient of an Order of Australia Medal for services to people with disabilities. He's a great bloke and a real inspiration who says, "In the ocean you're free."

Mike had been into skin diving in his teens, loving being in the ocean. He became a professional motorcycle racer in England where he had a serious accident in 1970. He got caught up in someone else's crash, broke his spine and was in hospital for six months.

Mike competed at the highest level in wheelchair marathons for 15 years. Then in 2000, after 30 years out of the water, some friends took him swimming off Phillip Island. He was pretty sure he would drown but instead discovered he had better movement in the water. The following day he bought a scuba set and it changed his life completely.

In 2006, Mike was awarded a Churchill Fellowship and travelled the world looking at disabled scuba-diving services, which led him to establish the DDA.

Mike's current project will enable people with disabilities to experience the under



Above: Mike Letch OAM, founder of the Disabled Divers Association.

Below: Mike touring Ricketts Point with his para-fins



water world of the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary, as snorkelers or scuba divers. It will take place over Summer 2012-13 and will be lead by Mike Letch and a team of volunteers. ❖

Dive Reports

Thursday, 24 May 2012

Diving Top End Port Philip Bay Wrecks

by John Lawler, VSAG.

Who

On *Karingal*: David Flew, Des Williams, Owen Green.



Photos: Phil Watson — *Karingal* above and *Miles Ahead* below.

On *Miles Ahead*: John Lawler, Hyconji Kim, Phil Watson.



Bay Conditions

Calm Northerly winds until 2 pm. Southerly build to 15 knots after 2 pm.

Visibility

On the ferro cement yacht "*Bodaci*" 6–8 metres.

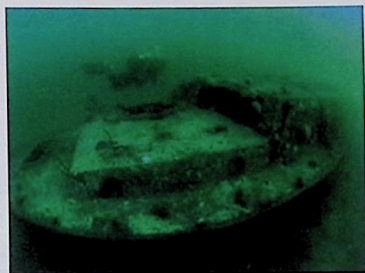
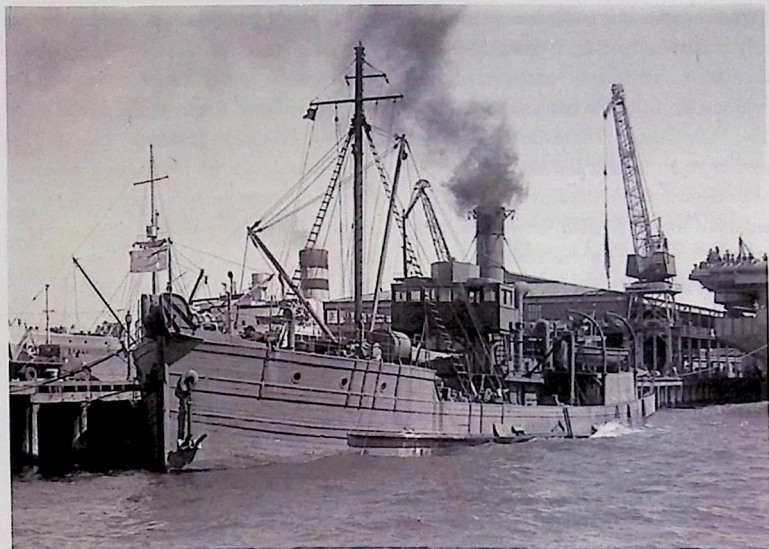


Photo: Phil Watson — The *Bodaci*.

On the "*Uralba*" 10 metres.

Monitoring the weather forecast from Monday there was about a 5 hour diving window for a plan to dive two wrecks in the top end of Port Phillip bay on Thursday. Two boats were available, 7 divers, one last minute cancellation... so six divers in the end.

Miles Ahead launched from Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron and *Karingal* headed out from its berth at Mordialloc. The 15 km run down to the yacht wreck was done in 25 minutes on *Miles Ahead* and 80 minutes on *Karingal*.



The *Uralba*.

The *Uralba* is a brilliant wreck to dive but conditions have to be right for even 5/6/7 meters of viz to make it good as the bay floor is muddy and very easily stirred up when strong winds blow mainly from the south or west.

The history of the *Uralba* is well documented, as the story below confirms.

Uralba History

Text courtesy of Malcolm Venturoni.

In the early 1940s, the North Coast Steam Navigation Company (NCSN Co), was in need of another vessel so an order was placed with E. Wright of Tuncurry, Ship-

builder. In 1942 the ship was completed and named *Uralba*. This was the last wooden coal burner built in Australia. The vessel still needed to be fitted out and subsequently was towed to Sydney. Here the *Uralba* was fitted with second hand machinery from the Ex-Sydney ferry *Kuramia*, an engine from the ferry *Vaucluse*, and the boiler from an old coaster called the *Malachite*.

Before the *Uralba* ever made a voyage for the NCSN Co, it was requisitioned by the RAN on 13 July 1942. The Navy fitted out the *Uralba* to suit the task it was to perform; it was painted grey and armed with one 4 inch gun and one

20mm cannon. The *Uralba* was based in Brisbane at first, where it operated as an auxiliary boom defence vessel and mine-field tender. In 1944 it was sent to Milne Bay, New Guinea. There the ship was used as an armament and stores carrier. After the war when the Navy no longer had a use for the *Uralba*, it was sent back to Sydney. In 1947 it was completely refitted under the supervision of the Navy and returned to the North Coast Steam Navigation Company.

The *Uralba* was used for coastal trade by the NCSN Co, but in less than six months work had run out and the *Uralba* was put up to be sold. The *Uralba* was the last vessel built for the North Coast Steam Navigation Company and shortly after the sale the company ceased operations.

At this time the State Electricity Commission (SEC) of Victoria was in need of a vessel to carry building materials from Tasmania to the mainland for the construction of the Latrobe Valley power stations. The *Uralba* seemed to be perfect, so after many negotiations, a price was agreed upon. On 20 July 1948 the SEC took delivery of the *Uralba* for the amount of 30,000 pounds. The firm F.H. Stephens Pty Ltd was appointed as the managing agents for the vessel

The *Uralba* made its first voyage for the SEC on 11 September 1948. In the three years that it served the SEC, it made a total of sixty four voyages. On each voy-

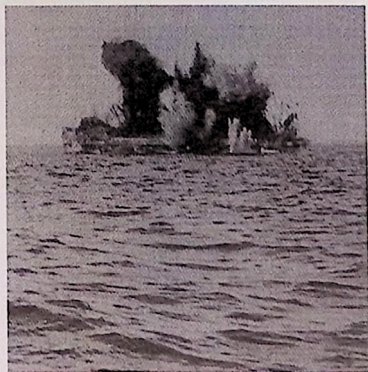
age it would bring back Tasmanian timber, cement and fibro-cement sheeting. On its return voyages, the *Uralba* generally carried cars, trucks and general goods to be sold in Tasmania. The SEC was pleased with the *Uralba* as it saved time and money on the construction program in the Latrobe Valley, although the crew was not of the same opinion. The ship apparently did not handle all too well in rough seas due to its flat bottom. The Captain had on many occasions requested the vessel be fitted with a bilge keel to offer some sort of stability. However, this was never done. In late 1951, the SEC had run out of need for the *Uralba*, and it was hired out for a period of eight months. It was later sold in September 1953 to the A & A Steamship Trading Syndicate of NSW for 12,500 pounds.

Little is documented on the *Uralba* from this date. We do know that in 1958 the High Court of Australia had taken possession of the vessel from the A & A Steamship Trading Syndicate and it was to be sold. The register was closed on 8 December 1958. On the 4 May 1960 the *Uralba* sank in the Maribyrnong. The owner at the time, Benny Gelbart of Footscray, had planned to convert the vessel to a cattle boat for use in the Northern Territory. The *Uralba* was raised, re-caulked and towed to a mooring opposite Charles Grimes Bridge on the Maribyrnong, where it stayed for sev-

eral years. In 1964 the *Uralba* was purchased by Duncan & Russell Pty Ltd of Melbourne. Its engines were removed and it was used as a dumb lighter.

On 5 November 1971 the *Uralba* was towed by the Fisheries and Wildlife Department to the Carrum Artificial Reef, and with the use of twenty sticks of gelignite was sent to its current resting place.

Mr Alan Clark, in charge of towing the *Uralba*, stated that the amount of gelignite used to sink the vessel was far in excess of what was required. His personal view was that one stick would have done the job. As a result a large section of the keel and planking was blown out. Straight after the sinking Mr Clark dived on the *Uralba* and commented on the damage in the hold where part of the hull was missing. Timbers from the *Uralba* washed up on Melbourne beaches for weeks after.



Sinking the *Uralba*.

The *Uralba* is now home to a large number of fish and is occasionally visited by scuba divers who probably don't realise the vessel's colourful history.

Uralba Technical Details:

- Engine: Single Screw, Triple Expansion Engine 14" x 22.25" x 37". 21" Stroke, 81 HP. Speed - 8 1/4 knots on trial. Average 7 knots. Engine Built 1914.
- Coal Burner Bunker Capacity: 75 tons, Consumption 10 1/2 tons per day.
- Boiler: Muir & Huston, Single ended Scotch, 3 Furnaces, 160 lbs, Bower built 1894
- Hull: Wooden Hull (Turpentine) Carvel built, Straight Stem, Counter Stern, 3 Bulk Heads, 2 Masts
- Tonnage: Gross 602.84 Net 312.14
- Length: 154ft
- Breadth: 36ft
- Depth: 9ft 9in.
- Hold Capacity: 18,340 cu ft, Length 76ft
- Water tanks: 40ft x 60ft
2 x 10 tons Boiler feed tanks,
4 x 8.5 tons Fresh water tanks,
1 x 11.5 tons Fresh water tanks.



8 August 2010

Uralba Wreck Dive Report

by Michael (MidnightElf) Mallis,
BSAC Training Officer.

The Uralba dive was coordinated and organised by Phil Watson for the 8th August. For the day, Phil had arranged for three boats to take 13 divers onto the site, all who had never dived it before and were keen for something new.

John Lawler, John Gladding and Abbas Hammoud had provided their boats for the dive. The divers were almost all from MSAC (Melbourne Sub Aqua Club) and BSAC (Bass Strait Aqua Club) - a joint club dive day which is often organised on almost a monthly basis.

Alas Abbas's boat developed engine problems early in the morning (water in the fuel line apparently) which necessitated a change of the passenger list for some of the boats. Fortunately the two other boats could accommodate the overflow.

I got the call 15 minutes before meeting up with Abbas but I diverted to John Lawler's place and so it was a minor diversion for me. Christine, Greg, Martina and I were to go with John Lawler's boat, leaving from the Beaumaris Yacht Club which proved a blessing as John's a private member and the boat ramp was quite free for launches. This was not the case

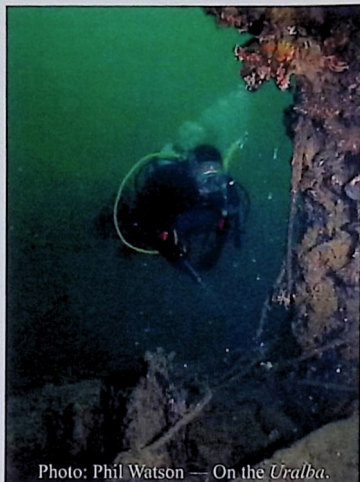


Photo: Phil Watson — On the Uralba.

from the public launch ramps in Carrum as they were crowded with eager boatmen wanting to take advantage of the great weather.

The morning weather was very kind to us as the water was like glass with no wind and lots of sunshine. It was the first weekend of August which exhibited uncharacteristic Melbourne conditions, almost like an early Spring but the 10.4C water temperature quickly reminded you that it was still winter. As it transpired, the whole day was to be like this which was astonishing as the forecast didn't seem to indicate it would actually be as good as it was.

At any rate we arrived at the dive site in about 15 minutes to find a few fishermen

trying their luck. Apparently the Uralba site is a well known good fishing site. One fisherman replied that the fishing was terrible, so much the better for us as shortly after he left for better hunting grounds.

With the sun shining, John skilfully manoeuvred his boat round the dive site until we were confident we had the wreck 'sighted' on the depth sounder. Martina and I were the first in whilst John and Christina were to follow soon after. Greg stayed on board, minding the fort until his turn came when John returned.

During the pre-dive brief I reminded everyone that this site is a known tangle hazard with fishing line and anchor chain and rope to be found all over the wreck so caution had to be exercised and knives carried.

After doing our in-water checks Martina and I followed the shot line down which was conveniently positioned just a few metres from the aft starboard side of the wreck—nice work John. My first impression was that the bottom was quite silty and it would be wise not to disturb it. No sea grass or bottom reef structure was sighted, just a fine layer of sandy silt.

The sides of the Uralba are made of wood and are, in the most part intact whilst the hull superstructure and stanchions are completely visible, like a skeleton framework with beams exposed. Visibility was

a reasonable 8 – 10 metres so the whole wreck, all 47 metres of her couldn't be seen from bow to stern. The whole wreck stands upright and aligned east-west with the stern to the east and at the time we dived it was bathed in an even glow which lent itself to providing some nice silhouette effects.

Given the age of the wreck, which was sunk on 5 November 1971, I was surprised at the lack of encrustation and general marine growth. I had expected more for some reason.

Marine critters weren't prevalent although I did spot a sea horse and the odd fish including a small (lost?) Snapper.

Martina initially led the way and I was content just to follow and make a video record of the dive. It was a buzz to slowly manoeuvre round and between stanchions and beams to the lower decks and follow Martina in a swim-through in which she momentarily got stuck but quickly extricated herself.



Photo: Phil Watson — Shot on the *Uralba*.

I remembered my deep cavern training and momentarily thought "...maybe I should have run a line..." when Martina created a white-out situation in the swim-through. But one was never in any danger given the fact you could always just go up through the deck and above the 'silt cloud'.

This is not a wreck that requires redundant air supply or line laying as it is very open. In any case I continued to follow her and ended up videoing the whole thing in glorious 'siltochrome' and wide-screen 'siltarama'.

After this Martina and I found ourselves in the aft accommodation section of the ship and inside a large area that was level with the main deck. We spent 15 minutes here just taking in the atmosphere. This area apparently comprised crew quarters and the galley. In any case it didn't really matter as it was fun just hanging around and admiring the play of light through the structure. I was to find out later that a section near the stern is still tiled and was apparently the galley area. I'll have to look out for this next time.

Even after 40 minutes we still didn't see the whole wreck. To do it justice you need a few more dives. I didn't even have time to look out for the 7 metre boat that was sunk at the same time as the Uralba on the starboard side, nor the water tanks under deck or the rudder that lies some ways to the stern. There are apparently

scallop dredges nearby as well. The fore mast lies on the deck, removed and obviously laid there before sinking.

The mast still has the steel ladder attached and is on the port side. All bollards are still visible on the fore deck and atop the aft deck, along with many other fittings such as fairleads, ladders, a derrick pulley and the mast sleeves. Unfortunately it appears that the boilers, funnel, machinery, anchor and bridge deck were removed before the scuttling. Parts of the decking have begun to deteriorate and collapse. Although the hull is partly filled with silt it is not in any danger of breaking up in the near future.

After 40 minutes Martina gave the signal to ascend. We followed the shot line up and did a six minute safety stop at six metres as planned. It was quite easy maintaining position as there was no swell, surge or current to contend with.

Afterwards during the dive debrief at the Carrum Hotel everyone to a man agreed that the Uralba was one of the best, if not the best, wreck dives they had ever done. I must agree and for the following reasons : first, it is easily accessible, just 3km off Carrum and inside the Heads; second, it is a complete wreck that is upright, is still recognisable as a ship with its superstructure still intact; third, it offers easy swim-throughs that are quite safe enough that a redundant air supply is not necessary.

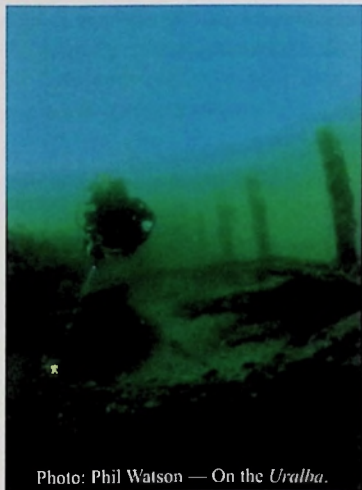


Photo: Phil Watson — On the *Uralba*.

Personally I think it's one of the best and easiest recreational dives in the bay, so why isn't it dived very much? The answer is that not many people know of its existence and none of the regular commercial dive boat operators run dives to this site. It is only rarely visited by divers who have access to a private boat. I for one will be back to further explore this fascinating and almost complete wreck within 32 km of the CBD and just off the Carrum beach.

The day's diving was extremely successful and we are already talking about diving the *Uralba* again and sooner rather than later. Once again many thanks to John Lawler and John Gladding for making their boats available for the day's

diving and to Phil Watson for organising the day's diving.

I highly recommend divers avail themselves to get out to this little-dived wreck, located right at their doorstep, if at all possible. It's a shame that there is no dive boat operator who makes regular trips to bay dives wrecks like this, even on days when all other boat dives outside the Heads are cancelled.

Apparently fishermen know of this site as a good fishing spot and I imagine that during the summer it is brimming with much more fish life.

Postscript

Almost three weeks later on the 4th September I found myself once again diving the *Uralba* with three other divers and diving off John Lawler's boat again.

The visibility this time was at least 15 metres and the experience was even better than the first time as I got to see so much more and appreciate the scale of the ship. I made a point this time to look over the small 7 metre boat that was also sunk sometime after the *Uralba*, the water tanks, and search for tiles in the aft accommodation area which indicate the location of the galley but alas the tiles proved elusive to find.

I just can't get enough of this dive site and expect to dive it again and again in the coming years. ❖

Tuesday, 29 May 2012

Night Dive on The Pinnacle

by Phil Watson, VSAG.

We motored out of Mordialloc Creek on a perfect evening. On board *Karingal* we had David Flew (Skipper), Dave R, Des Williams, Helen, Michael and myself.

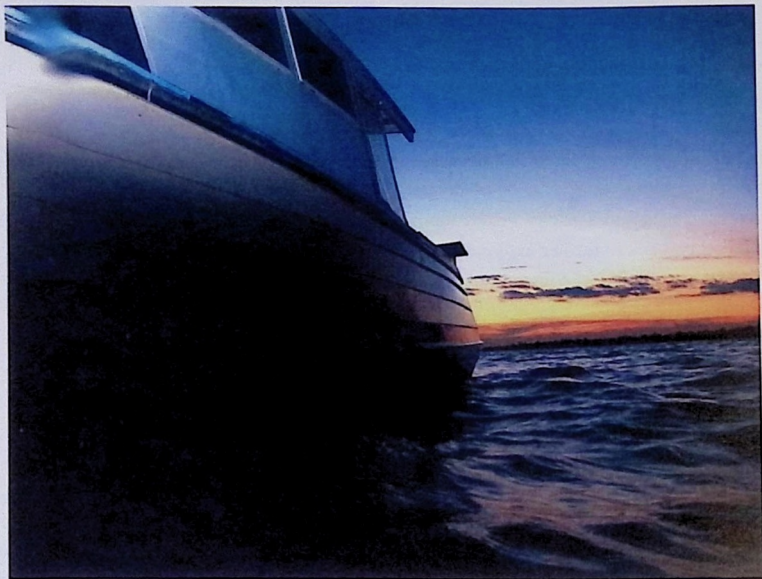
John Lawler was on the dock to farewell us and claimed he saw a ripple, but I have my doubts. We anchored over the pinnacle and dropped a shot. It rises up to 4 m from the surface but drops 8 m to the base of the structure.

Helen, Michael and I were the first over the side. The viz was pretty ordinary on the surface but cleared up dramatically once we got under a surface layer. It was around 10m viz on the bottom.

The pinnacle was full of fish life. I spotted old wives, wrasse and several large rays. There is also lots of very colourful sponge life on the walls and fissures of the structure, which is always an engaging dive.

The 12-degree water got the better of us after 45 minutes so we surfaced.

Everyone whose names began with "D" went in as the second group. Des was



crazy-brave to do the dive in a wetsuit. We were worried about the integrity of his extremities in the cold water, but apparently there is no lasting damage.

We then motored back to Mordialloc on a perfect evening, which was topped off by some lovely phosphorescence triggered by the bow wave.

I didn't take my UW camera for this dive, but have included some shots taken on previous dives at this site.

Ed: Photos by Phil Watson. ❖



Thursday 24 May 2012 and
Tuesday 29 May 2012

Nudie Reef & North Wall

by Des Williams, VSAG

My thanks to John Lawler for his invitation to join a group of divers on Thursday 24th May to dive from the Mordialloc area. Because of John's invitation, I met some new diving friends and enjoyed three memorable dives in the cool, but quite clear Autumn waters of the Bay.

It was a pleasure to meet David Flew, David Reinhard, Phil Watson, Owen Green, Hyeonji Kim, Helen and Michael.

On the 24th we dived at the old ferocement yacht "*BOADICEA*" followed by a dip at the "*URALBA*" wreck and a few days later on a beautiful calm evening on the 29th May, a very enjoyable night dive on "Phil's Reef" in Beaumaris Bay.

On each occasion, I was assigned to David Flew's wonderful boat '*KARINGAL*' from Mordialloc. And a very comfortable diving platform it is too. Obviously it moves a lot slower than JL's mighty dive boat, but that was just fine with me, as I had a chance on both trips to get to know new friends and have some time to discuss local diving with David Flew who has a great knowledge of the area.

Boadicea and Uralba

The *BOADICEA* (1983) and *URALBA* wreck dives were most enjoyable. I'd not been to the *BOADICEA* for over 15 years and on that last occasion the underwater visibility had been about one metre, so the wreck was observed mostly with the diver's ten eyes fingers!

But on the 24th, we had about 6m viz and spent about 20 mins investigating the spooky old sunken pleasure craft. Phil took some great photos.

We then moved to the *URALBA* wreck, where we had the site to ourselves, as there was not another boat anywhere in sight. Another terrific dive was enjoyed there, about 35mins, as we swam around the entire vessel and paused at the bow to gaze at the towering, robustly built ugly bows of this old steamer. My first dive on the vessel and I was most impressed, great viz, maybe 8m+ and again Phil captured some great images.

David had us back safely in the Mordialloc Creek before the weather started to drop off. We had been extremely lucky with this excellent diving day, as the preceding days had been rubbish with lots of wind and the day after our diving trip, it blew up again with heavy rains, so we chose a nice dive "window".

Thank you to JL and David for their cleverly calculated dive program between storms, and who would imagine the water

would be that clear? The best visibility is certainly achieved in the depths of Autumn and Winter, no marine organism blooms about.

Phil's Reef

Just five days later, I was back on the *KARINGAL* for a night dive on Tuesday 29th May. It was a picture-perfect evening, flat sea and a VERY pretty sunset, which was captured by those on our boat with cameras. With beautiful Beaumaris Bay as a backdrop and the city lights sparkling along the coastline, our two teams of three divers enjoyed two 50 min dives on "Phil's Reef". What an amazing little bommie it is!

There are rocky overhangs and crevices all so completely alive with a myriad of marine life. The water temperature was 12 degrees, so it was a cool dive. I'd never seen so many Globefish hovering about until I swung my torch around me.

I dived with the two Davids and they were very busy with their cameras, as there was just so much to see and photograph. Some enormous yellow sponges were my fave, but we also saw a large dusky morwong, some nice rays and several colourful leather-jackets all trying to get a snooze in the shelter of the reef. Our torches temporarily disturbed their nap though.

There were many Old Wives about too and we circumnavigated the reef before

returning to the boat, which was quite unmistakable. David F had installed his diver's night "flag" which is a pole showing red over white over red lights, indicating Diver Below. It was an impressive sight from water level as we swam back on a smooth surface. It reminded me of a walk through Amsterdam's red light area! Great job of the light David, but I wonder how many "fisho's" actually know what it means!!

Anyway, thank you ALL very much for a couple of wonderful diving days. We had lots of laughs and plenty of fun together. And David thank you for your hospitality on *KARINGAL*.

Ed: See some of Philip's great photos of diving on the Uralba on the front and back covers and front inside cover page.

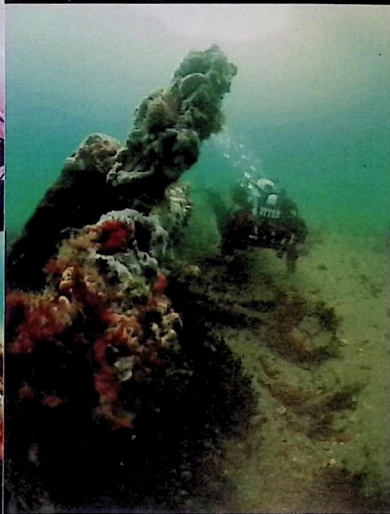


Photo: Phil Watson — Sponge at Phil's Reef.

Sunday, 10 June 2012

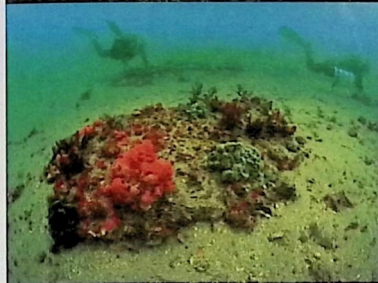
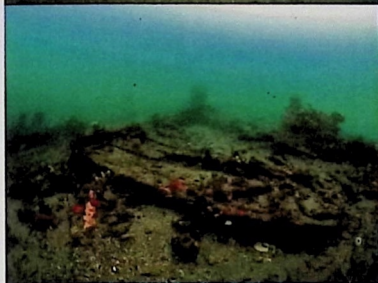
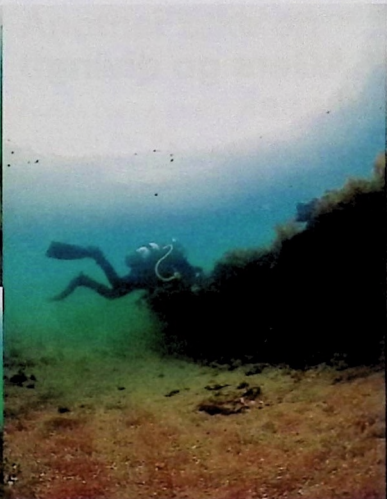
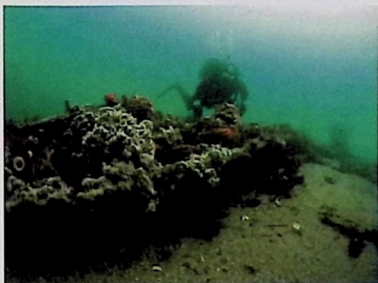
VSAG Dive Day in Port Philip Bay

photos by Phil Watson, VSAG.



Above left (T to B): Leaving Ryc on *Miles Ahead*. It's Raining! Diver on Rosebud Reef.

Above right (T to B): Down on the *Hurricane*. Diver on the *Hurricane*.



Above left (T to B): Diver on the *Hurricane*. The *Hurricane*. Growth on the *Hurricane*.
Above right (T to B): Ledge at Rickett's Point. Phil and Sandy at Rickett's Point.

Wednesday, 4 July 2012

VSAGers go diving midweek

by Lloyd Borrett, VSAG,
photos by Phil Watson, VSAG.

On 4 July 2012 an intrepid group of VSAG divers headed out from Sorrento.

On *Miles Ahead* were: John Lawler, Lloyd Borrett, Cheryl Lees, Michael Mallis and Sandy Webb.

On Michael Sesin's boat were: Michael Sesin, David Flew, Phil Watson.

No slack water times were available to us, and it was too rough to head outside the bay. We decided to head out to the seal platform as some people wanted to dive with the seals. With a strong flood current running, I thought it was going to be a bit of a challenge for those that tried it and that's how it turned out to be.

Of course positioning the boat to get the divers onto the platform was going to be critical. JL took on the job on Michael's boat, and yours truly was manoeuvring

Miles Ahead. Unfortunately, I got the divers into the wrong position and they missed the platform. We tried towing them back but the current was too strong, so they came back aboard and we tried to get them near the platform again.

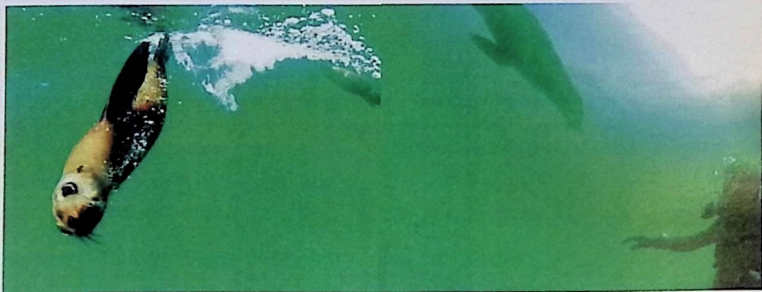
Dive completed, and everyone back aboard, we then headed down to Rye where some divers went in to do a scallop collecting drift dive. I stayed in the boat with Cheryl, eating lunch in the rain.

The divers were a bit disappointed as they didn't come across the fertile scallop beds that frequent the area and thus their catch was severely limited.

Both boats then headed over to Blairgowrie Pier where we tied up to the low landing. As we geared up to go in we were entertained by the bemusing antics of a group of new divers with their instructor.

Once in the water, Cheryl and I headed slowly along the wave wall. After a 6 month lay off from diving it was great to be back under the water again.

Blairgowrie Pier remains my favourite bay shore dive. Splashes of vivid colour





Another take on the day

by John Lawler, VSAG,
photos by Phil Watson, VSAG.

Where: Seal Colony, Scallop Beds,
Blairgowrie Pier

Conditions: Very Good, low winds,
swell 0.5mtr., viz 10 mtrs.

The tides were all out of whack on this day and the rip was not too kind for exiting outside either so inside the bay diving was the plan.

As there was interest in having some fun with the seals this was the first dive plan. The seal colony was well and truly busy with lots of baby seals taking interest in the arrival of the divers and the boats... but the mothers were also keeping a lookout for these visitors!

Michael Sessin and his crew all planned to dive together and I would cross over and skipper his boat. Michael Mallis and Cheryl dived from my boat so Lloyd skippered.

As there was a flood current running, positioning the boat was crucial as dropping the divers from the wrong line would cause them to miss the pylons... but we got it right although David missed and was collected well north of the pylons.

and dancing rays of light filtering between the huge pier's numerous columns like a late afternoon sun peaking into a wooded glen, generate a spiritual essence.

After about 30 minutes, we were nearly out at the end of the sea wall when Cheryl indicated she was getting a bit cold, so we headed back.

With everyone aboard the boats, we headed off to the Sorrento boat ramp, retrieved the boats and unloaded our gear. Most then headed off to The Scuba Doctor in Rye for air fills and after-dive chat on the couches there. The end of yet another great VSAG dive day. ❖

Previous page: Seals with divers in Port Philip Bay.

Above: Marine growth on Blairgowrie Pier.

Lloyd however was too far west of the structure and the divers were carried quickly away and a lengthy effort to tow them back was also a failure as the current was far too strong. Divers climbed back onto the boat... then all was good.

Second dive all made the pylons and hung on long enough to have fun with the cheeky seals.

Off to the scallop beds. Second dive was to show Sandy and Michael Mallis the scallop beds and to get them excited for the prospect of a nice fresh dinner. Normally my scallop beds are in around 15 mtrs off White Cliffs at Rye but we ended up in about 10 mtrs with the embarrassing result for me... no scallops... well just 5! Mmmmmun!

Next dive was Blairgowrie Pier and with both boats tied off to the lower landing all divers splashed in. There was a slight current running but not too testy... but even in our dry suits the water was COLD. Our plan for a long dive was cut short to about 30 minutes but even though it was short, the pylons held some magic sights... and we even found the ladder normally there for exit and entry on the sea bed. Now how did this almost new ladder end up on the bottom?

So back to Sorrento for clean-up and off to The Scuba Doctor in Rye for warm drinks, snacks, good chats and fills. ❖



Photos: Phil Watson — Marine growth on Blairgowrie Pier.

Friday, 13 July 2012

Shore Diving

by John Lawler, VSAG.

Who: David Flew, David Reinhard, John Lawler.

Where: South Road Brighton Beach Baths.

Conditions: Excellent, sunny, flat waters, excellent viz.

An easy walk down two sets of stairs, over the bluestone wall, and across the sandy beach, had the three of us into the shallows and clear water as we swan out to the remains of the old Brighton Baths demolished many years ago.

Amazing is the number of brilliant nudibranchs inhabiting the structures here... they were everywhere... and the sea anemones were just spectacular. (See photos courtesy of David Reinhard.)

This is quite a special place, if only made up of old metals and wooden pylons, but a really nice dive. We had perfect conditions on this day... flat seas... no wind and very good viz.

After a 55 minute dive our dry suits were just starting to let us know the water temp was 10.5dgs... time to get out!

The top end of Port Phillip Bay has so many dive sites to explore from old wrecks to the fantastic reefs around Ricketts Point, Parkdale Reefs, the new Carum artificial reefs... and this was one of the best!



Thanks to Michael Mallis for the directional map and David Reinhardt for acting as tour guide.. and to both Davids for looking after the not too experienced shore diver... me. ❖

Trip Reports

Planes, Ships & Automobiles:

Tasmanian Combined Clubs Weekend, Queens Birthday Weekend June 2012

by John Mills, VSAG.

Dive Captain: David Geekie (VSAG).

VSAG members: John, Priya, David & Mick.

Getunder Members: Alan Beckhurst and Mary Malloy.

Monash Uni members: Chan, Anna and Skanda.

The joint VSAG/Getunder trip to attend the combined Tasmanian Clubs weekend at Bicheno was a long time in the planning due to the logistics involved in crossing Bass Strait. Priya indicated in February that she would like to attend this. My initial reaction was that I was not so keen but she should put her name down. As the time drew closer David Geekie announced at a VSAG meeting that he was booking a four berth cabin on the *Spirit of Tasmania* and there was a spot left. I thought, "Why should Priya have all the fun?" so I said to Dave at the end of the meeting that I would fill the final berth.

So far so good. However, on a rainy day in early May I awoke and thought I'll take the car instead of riding the

pushbike. So off I went. At Vermont on the Burwood highway I went past an accident and all the other cars started to rubberneck. The light in front went red, I looked up to see brake lights and that was it, my car was crunched. The insurance and repair process was then kicked off. I was assured that the car would be ready at the start of June.

Two weeks before departure Priya's car decided it did not want to work so we were down to no cars. But we were still on track as my car would be ready in a couple of days. Eventually my car was ready. Priya took it to work the day before the trip without incident. We packed all the gear on Thursday and were ready to embark on our long weekend boat trip that we had been looking forward to for so long.

There was a slight warning bell on the Friday as Priya e-mailed me to say that she saw a small amount of smoke come from the car on the way to work. The plan was coming together, after much studying of timetables and how to get from Newport station to Dave's by bike and train, I took off on the bike and took the trains. Just as I approached Newport Priya rang. I thought, "Great, she is on the road." Not so good. Her message was, "I have just turned onto the freeway at Dandenong and the car has overheated."

I thought, "Oh no!" I cycled up to David's and saw Mick and indicated to him

that I think we have a serious problem as Priya is stuck on the freeway and the ferry departure is approaching rapidly. David turned up and we went through a number of scenarios. However my main concern was to get my nearest and dearest with the broken car safely off the freeway. Reluctantly I had to pull the pin and roll with the punches. Dave offered to put the bike in the car and give me a lift to Port Melbourne. I declined and said, "Nah I'll ride to Southern Cross as I need to waste some energy." As a side note, Priya had heard whilst waiting to be rescued from the freeway, on the radio that there was an accident inbound on the Westgate. She thought, "We would have had to contend with that also."

On the train home I rang my sister to vent my woes and it was decided that she could give us a lift to the airport if we wanted to salvage the weekend. So I trundled off home on the bike and yep it was raining. As I started to take the part of the route from the road to the bike path, I realised I had misjudged it as there was rain on my glasses. The thought process was, "Shit, there's a gutter there and I'm going to hit it." I did just that and off I came. What a perfect way to end the day. So I dragged my broken and bruised body home to find Priya finishing up with the RACV after getting the car towed home. Yep the radiator hose had popped and drained the radiator. After this I booked a flight to Launceston and hired the cheapest car I could find. At least we could fly over, pick up the car, get to Bicheno, drop it off at Launceston

and return with Dave as planned and take the ferry home.

I SMS'd David our arrangements and got a return call from him that dropped out. At this point we had not had dinner so I set off on foot to Knox city to get something in the drizzle. I rang David on the way and he said that "He was glad that we were making the effort, but... you haven't heard the last of it." Alan and Mary had run into the back of someone on the West Gate Bridge (refer to the sidenote above re: accident on the Westgate). So all their stuff had to be put into his car and theirs was towed away. He asked if I could change the hire car drop point from Launceston to Devonport as we now had more bods than cars.

Saturday morning was spent reconfiguring our gear so that we could meet the 20 kg baggage limit with Jetstar. We could "borrow" tanks and weights when we got there. We finally got our 2 checked bags down to 20 kg and sorted out the carry on bags. My sister arrived and took us to the airport and we got checked in and had something to eat in the Qantas lounge. Finally we got across Bass Strait, picked up the hire car and headed to Bicheno. I used my iPad to help me navigate. I don't know which way it took us but it was via the windiest goat track of a road ever.

Tasmania has a wide variety of wildlife and it all wants to run across the road at night. The count of near misses was : 1 wombat, 1 wallaby, 1 devil, 1 possum and a rabbit. We finally arrived in the bustling metropolis known as Bicheno.

We decided to head for the hall and find the divers. I figured I would go to the pub first and get the essential beer supplies. After driving around the darkened streets trying to find a pub or a hall Priya said, "Where is everybody, these businesses have lights on but nobody is in them?"

We stopped and got a bottle of water from one of the few things open and she got a hot tip that what we thought was the RSL was actually the memorial hall. Sure enough we arrived and found divers. We entered the hall and I could hear AB's voice narrating a video about the sinking of the Canberra. I thought, "Finally, we have arrived." After standing in the doorway Mary arrived and showed us where the Victorian Contingent was sitting. I went to the registration desk and asked if there was anywhere to buy beer in Bicheno at this time of night (7:30pm). They indicated that they had an honesty system consisting of an Esky of beer around the corner - you took your beer and chucked some money in an ice-cream container. Hey it worked.

We sat through a few more presentations and did a trivia quiz. We did OK on the general questions but lacked a wee bit on the specific dive sites. We really did not know how to answer the question regarding the percentage of heat lost through an uncovered head in water as we weren't sure if it referred to two heads or one.

There were some door prizes given out and Priya somehow scored a bum-bag.

The night wound up and we returned to the accommodation and turned in for the

night. The plan was to get up at about 7:00 am for an 8 o'clock dive.

All were up by 7:00 am and we hoofed it to the dive shop to meet the dive boat.



After about 10 minutes of inactivity we thought maybe we were to meet at the wharf. We grabbed the full tanks and headed to the wharf. Sure enough the boat was there. The tide was quite low so it is a fair drop to load the gear into the boat. Likewise it is an obstacle course - like, climb down over some truck tyres to get into the boat.

One of the unique things about Bicheno, it's a very short ride out to the sites. In no time we were on the site. Priya and I let the others gear up first and get in. We then followed suit and Bruce the skipper dropped us onto The Canyon. We dropped down over some weed covered boulder and I thought, "Ho hum." Then the visibility cleared and we were in the canyon with lots of sea whips and soft coral. We explored some more, saw a massive Cray (No touch, No take and the skippers rule was no crays come on the boat even if outside the reserve). We did our deco then clambered back onto the

boat and took the short trip back to the wharf and unloaded the boat.

It was then back to the house for "Breakfast". Not having any Muesli bars or snacks we were really hungry so we stopped at the IGA which was now open and got some food supplies to tide us over for the rest of the weekend. In what seemed like no time at all it was approaching midday so we took off to the dive shop and loaded the boat again.

We headed out to a site known as 27b which had an interesting swim through. Thanks to AB for the lend of his torch, my torch was one of the first things ditched to get our bag weights down for the flight. The boat load dropped in and we followed our guide to an opening. We then swam through a fairly dark tunnel (again massive crays everywhere). We then came back out into the open water and fossicked around amongst the whips and soft coral. Once everyone was back on board it was a short ride back to the wharf, then off to the shop to unload the boat.

After this we went back to the house and rested until the combined clubs dinner. This gave David some time to dry out his dry suit using his "patented" hair dryer and plumber's pipe system.

An advance crew headed off to the dinner, yet they returned soon after as they were not quite ready. We had a few more drinks and sat around and chatted and headed back down to the hall about half an hour later. Everything was fine. The caterers were ready with the roast; the

honesty system for beer was set up. Like most catered dinners, each table goes up when called for service. A whisper went around the Vic table that there was a conspiracy in place and we were being called out of sequence. Eventually there was a rebellion held and we just went and got dinner.

The meal was quite nice and there was plenty for everyone. There were a number of door prize draws throughout the evening - we didn't do too badly - I scored another bum-bag, Al and Mary got some blue tooth hardware. I would estimate that half the Tassie diving community would have a copy of a "Hook, Line and Sinker" DVD. This is a locally produced Tasmanian fishing program. It seems that the MC worked for WIN TV and had scored a box of these as giveaways. All joking aside, you had to applaud the effort that the organisers went to to get items for prizes and auctions, as we all know how difficult it is to get donations for our own club functions. I don't think anyone was disappointed.

One of the highlights of the weekend was the auctions. One of the divers was a licensed auctioneer who had quite a theatrical style. Mick did his bit to raise the prices by bidding on some items. Luckily he managed to judge at what point to pull out. I have seen this blow up in people's faces where they have misjudged and had to shell out for something they didn't want or do some fast talking to back track. The trip for the ex HMAS Canberra went for a good price, so some of our Southern Cousins will be over to dive the

wreck.

The photograph judging was carried out - there were some good quality entrants, and prizes were awarded to the various categories. I noticed each prize pack contained an obligatory copy of the "Hook, Line and Sinker" DVD.

One contest they run during the weekend is that each club produces a video during the afternoon to a set theme and each is judged by the audience "clap o meter". This year's theme was Kevin vs. Julia. The winning entry relied heavily on a Benny Hill slapstick theme. It involved characters dressed as Julia, Kevin and Mr Abbott, there were above and below water chase scenes with a Yakitty Sax soundtrack. What was particularly impressive was that the Abbott character wore the trademark red "Budgie Smugglers" throughout the whole sequence, including the underwater footage. The word on the street was that the actor spent about 15 minutes in 12°C water filming this in nothing but a BC and red speedos. All I can say is they breed them tough down there.

The festivities wound down, the beer ran out and we retired to the house, to rest up for the next day's diving.

Again we had a 7:00 am start and headed straight to the wharf. I was prepared and took a stash of Muesli bars to tide me over until Breakfast. The boat was loaded and we headed out to the "Golden Bommies". There were 2 crew, Al and Mary (The Image Takers) and the rest.

The skipper positioned us above the

Bommies and the instructions were to jump in, do a quick check and drop to the bottom. If all was done right you should see the top of the Bommies. We did this, managed to keep together as we descended and sure enough we saw the top of the Bommies. We looked around in the clear (but cold water). There was plenty to see, heaps of fish and yep the obligatory Cray's. Mick and Dave were still looking around as my air approached the red. I signalled I was going and returned to the boat. Again we took the short run back to the wharf unloaded the boat to let the next crew load up and then it was home for breakfast.

One of Mick's observations after this dive was, "That it's not so bad not being able to take crays as it has given me a chance to study and understand their behaviour better, so I'll be able to use this to catch them at home." I am not sure this aspect was considered when the marine park was declared.

In what seemed like no time we were back at the Wharf and loading up again. The last site was Trap Reef which was like an underwater valley. Again the visibility was good. There were schools of fish and sea whips everywhere. This was a very enjoyable dive and a great way to wrap up the diving. We headed back to the shop, washed the gear down and sorted out the dive payments. Mary had this under control with her spreadsheet.

We stopped off at the bakery and got a feed of Cottage Pies for lunch. Then it was back to the house to tidy up and pack



up. Everyone chipped in and this was done in no time. It was a great effort by Mick and Dave to get 6 sets of gear, 10 tanks and all the Imaging Equipment into the 4WD. This was declared a new club record.

We meandered back to Devonport and met up back at the Ferry Terminal where I ditched the hire car.

The tanks required unloading and placing in a "Bottle Cage" for the trip across Bass Strait. It was here we realised we only had 9 tanks. Mick rang the Dive Shop and yep, we'd left one behind. It would need to be freighted back. We joined the car queue and eventually boarded the Ferry. We got settled in our cabin (which was quite comfortable) and went down below for Dinner. After Dinner we sat around for a while with the Monash guys, talked diving, and had a few beers. Mick was working through his bottle of "contraband" whisky. Most then retired for the night. Priya and I had a bit of a walk around and explored the ship and watched some Television before going back to the cabin.

At around 6:00 am the announcement was made that we would be docking. Everything was stowed and we disembarked. We met up with Mary and Alan in the car park, I caught a tram to get to work and Priya got a lift with the Monash guys to a rail station. I got to work on time and the adventure was officially over.

On reflection, whilst walking from the rail station to work I realised that the following modes of transport were employed to accomplish this mission. A pushbike, a train, an aeroplane, a car, a dive boat, a ship and a tram. If I could have worked out the Bus time tables I could have added this to the list. I gave up and decided a walk in the cool of the morning was not so bad.

To sum up, it was worth pushing through the initial disappointment of circumstances conspiring to make us miss the Ferry and making the effort to find alternatives. The diving was good, it was great to see how the Tassie diving community works and reassuring to see that it is quite strong. The club should consider more trips/weekends away as this is my preferred style of diving. It is a lot less rushed than the Sunday morning dash down the Peninsula (this would be an exception as we missed the boat). Another option that worked well was the accommodation in a shared house.

Thanks to David for his encouragement not to give up. ❖

Diving at Phuket, Thailand

9 May 2010

by Adam Borge, VSAG.

This was not only my first overseas diving adventure but also my first overseas travelling experience. We went to Phuket, Thailand for 2 weeks and I was determined to do a day's diving whilst there. After visiting 5 dive operators in Phuket, I decided on "Thailand Divers". Despite the fact they didn't have the largest boat out of all the operators, the dive shop was the most impressive and they had staff who spoke English which also



gave me a lot more confidence to dive with them.

I did a day trip with "Thailand Divers" which included 3 dives, all equipment supplied, including breakfast and lunch on the boat, plus hotels transfers to and from the boat for a great price of \$3200 Baht or approx. \$115 Aussie dollars.

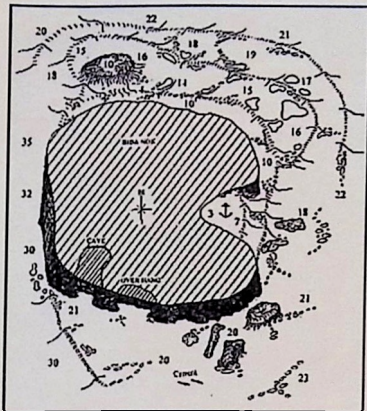


The boat left at 7.30 am and started the 3.5 hour ride to our first dive of the day at Kuh Bida Nok. Time went by quickly as we had breakfast and I spoke to people from all over the world including England, Singapore, Ireland, USA, Thailand and one other Aussie on board.

Once at our first dive site, we geared up. It was an absolute pleasure to kit up in a shortie wetsuit, with no hood or gloves or dive boots and jump into water at a lovely 29 degrees!!!!!!!!!! There were 18 divers on board and were broken up into groups of similar experience and qualifications. I dived in the experienced group made up of 2 others - one an Englishman who was a dive instructor and a fellow Aussie. We had gorgeous female dive guide from the Philippines who was with us for all 3 dives. And when I say gorgeous I mean damn gorgeous !!!!!!!

Dive 1

Koh Bida Nok — max depth 22.6 m, dive time 50 mins, water temp 29.



This was my first ever dive in a shortie wet suit, with no gloves, hood etc. and using an aluminium tank. I had only 2 kilos of weight as advised by my dive guide and felt a bit underweighted on this dive once in the water.

A giant jump off the back of the boat and down we went. I was immediately struck by the similarity of diving in Victoria, Qld and Sydney within seconds of hitting the bottom. The coral and beautiful colours on the rocks reminded me of Victo-

ria but the abundant fish numbers and varieties reminded me of Qld and NSW.

This small islet is around 2km south of Koh Phi Phi and it is one of the better dive sites in the area. There is a shallow bay on one side with colourful coral gardens and a drop off on the other side with a dramatic hard coral wall housing several species of moray eel. We found a few caverns and overhangs here where we saw bearded scorpion fish and lionfish lurking about. I was told at the right time of year (December to February) mantas and whale sharks have been spotted here.

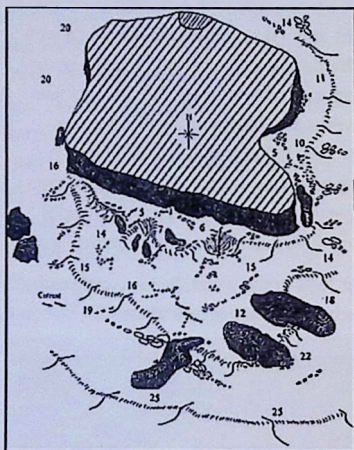
Not long in the water, I saw a turtle and loads of fish in huge numbers.



Dive 2

After a 30 min or so interval time we did the short boat ride over to dive site no 2.

Koh Bida Mai — max depth 21.6 m, dive time 42 mins, water temp 29.



For this dive I added an extra kilo of weight to my belt which made the dive a lot more comfortable regarding buoyancy control.

The little sister dive site of Koh Bida Nok has a very different underwater terrain to the first dive site. More boulders and fallen rocks here make some interesting swim throughs that are often hidden by large shoals of glassfish. Good buoyancy control here is essential as bearded lionfish are lurking on the bottom as well as loads of sea urchins with very long spikes. On close inspection of the walls

and caves, we were lucky enough to spot a ghost pipefish or boxer shrimp. There is a coral outcrop called Fantasy Reef where you can spend some time and a stag horn garden where you may come across leopard or black tip sharks. Again, this dive had an abundant amount of fish life.

After our second dive we began a 2 hour ride back towards the mainland to the final dive site while we had our lunch and a long surface interval. Lunch was prepared by our Thai chef who prepared traditional Thai food which was restaurant quality and there was plenty for all to eat!

Dive 3

Shark Point — max depth 19.8 metres, dive time 38 mins, water temp 28.

This was the dive I was most looking forward to as I was told we could see a few different species of sharks and at times in large numbers!

Hin Musang was given official marine sanctuary status in 1992. It's made up of 3 large rock pinnacles, the largest of which breaks the surface. The sheer density and diversity of coral and fish life makes diving here a wonderful experience. Phuket Shark Point's most colourful feature is the profusion of purple and pink soft corals that cling to the rocks, and its huge barrel sponges. Hin Musang derives its name from the leopard sharks



the second and then the first pinnacle perhaps a mile away. The dive guides were a bit flustered by the strong current after telling us that it was very unusual conditions for the area. Myself and the other Aussie diver had a ball in those conditions having dived in similar currents in Victoria.

I was told Bamboo sharks can also be found hiding under coral ledges, sadly I didn't see any one this dive! Lionfish and scorpion fish are all over the reef, the latter being incredibly well camouflaged against the coral. There are many different types of puffer fish including the cute little yellow boxfish. Moorish idols and the very similar looking banner fish can be seen on every dive. Blue-ringed angelfish and emperor angelfish are also common. Also we saw another 2 turtles in different spots around the pinnacles!

After this dive we began the 1.5 hour trip back to shore to end a memorable day's diving. This was a fun trip as the boat had a very well stocked beer fridge open to divers after their last day!

Great diving experience! ❖



that are resident there, making it one of the more popular spots. I was lucky enough to see several leopard sharks including a small one which was too fast for me to photograph!

We jumped into the water at the 3rd pinnacle from the island and let the strong current that had chopped up drift us to

Diving the web

by Lloyd Borrett, VSAG

BSAC incident report available

The BSAC annual "Diving Incident Report 2011" is available online from www.bsac.com/incidentreport. Published by BSAC each year, the 2011 report recorded a total of 375 incidents, 11 fatal, throughout the UK.

Highlighted conclusions from the latest report include:

- Diver age and health issues are emerging as critical factors implicated in fatalities.
- Incidents relating to boat problems (engine and fuel) remain high and cases of 'lost diver' have increased.
- Six of the eleven fatal incidents involved separation of some kind.
- Six fatal cases involved divers diving in a group of three or more. Five of these six cases involved separation. (In a group it is possible for a separation to go unnoticed.)

The report makes for interesting reading and is an invaluable resource for learning about safe diving practices. It's obvious that most of the incidents reported within this document could have been avoided had those involved followed a few basic principles of safe diving practice.

By browsing through the details in this report you can learn from other's mistakes. They have had the courage and generosity to record their experiences for publication, and it becomes a resource we can use to avoid similar problems.

Underwater Journal: a Diving Adventure Magazine

Underwater Journal is the official publication of SDI/TDI/ERDI International Training. It's a great read, with much more than just the usual dive travel stories. Best of all it's available online for free. See

www.underwaterjournal.com



Hard Suit, Easy Dives

Spend two hours exploring a shipwreck at 200 metres, then pop right to the surface without doing deco. This profile, which sounds like a tech diver's fantasy, is a reality for users of the EXOSUIT, a self-contained, one-atmosphere dive suit.

The latest generation of hard suits from Nuytco Research Ltd., the EXOSUIT, designed by Dr. Phil Nuytten, is significantly lighter and more agile than the original Newtsuit.

You can learn more about it online at: www.nuytco.com



STOP.

Don't Enter the Water
Without **DAN** Protection



Emergency Medical Evacuations can cost more than \$100,000 and that doesn't include treatment costs.

**Be Prepared. Join the Experts
in Dive Accident Management**



www.danasiapacific.org

VSAG Member Profile

Phil Watson

Year joined VSAG: 2011

How long have you been diving:

4 years scuba; 30 years snorkeling and freediving around the Victorian coast.

First diving experience:

A try-dive off Cairns which convinced me I needed to get my dive ticket.

Favorite diving location in Melbourne:

Lonsdale Wall (salt) and Lake Eildon (fresh).

Most memorable diving experience:

Seeing Mola Molos on a dive at Crystal Bay off the east coast of Bali. They came up from the trench and swam right past us at 30 m with their retinue of Moorish Idols.



Mola Molos on a dive in Bali.



Phil Watson diving in Lake Elizabeth (self portrait illuminated by dive torch).

Most unusual or amusing diving experience:

Diving Lake Elizabeth in the Otways in the hope of seeing a platypus. We didn't find one but it was good experience in low-viz diving.

Most valued piece of diving equipment:

In a Melbourne winter it has to be my neo drysuit.

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

Lake Baikal. ❖



Nomination for Committee

I hereby nominate

for the committee of the Victorian Sub Aqua Group for
the next three years.

Proposer:


Secunder:

Acceptance by person nominated:

..... Date:/...../.....

Note: If more people are nominated than positions available, a ballot will be taken at the annual general meeting.

Please return to any member of the committee before 1 September. Photocopies or scans of this page are acceptable.



Emergency Contact Information Mornington Peninsula Area

Police – Ambulance – Fire	000
Water Police	1800 135 729
	or 03 9534 2983
Diving Emergency Service	1800 088 200
Rosebud Hospital 1527 Nepean Hwy, Rosebud	03 5986 0666
Frankston Hospital Hastings Road, Frankston	03 9784 7777
The Bays Hospital Main Street, Mornington	03 5975 2009
Southern Peninsula Rescue (Sorrento)	03 5984 4555
Mornington Bay Rescue Service	0419 233 999
Coast Guard (Queenscliff)	03 5258 2222
Coast Guard (Hastings)	03 5979 3322
Coast Guard (Safety Beach)	03 5981 4443
State Emergency Service (SES)	26 14 68
Diving Doctors	
Dr Pamela Dagley (Eltham)	03 9439 2222 (VSAG member)
Dr Vanessa Haller (Carrum Downs)	03 9782 6666
Dr Adrian Murrie (Sorrento)	03 5984 4322
Dr Guy Williams (Rosebud)	03 5981 1555
VHF Emergency Channel 16	(club channel 73)
27 MHz AM Emergency Channel 88	(club channel 96)

Tidal Streams at the Heads — August 2012

RED italic times are slack water with EBB about to start (Flood Slack) which are the best diving conditions near the Heads.

Mon 30	Tue 31	Wed 1	Thu 2	Fri 3	Sat 4	Sun 5
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
428	544	643	34	159	319	425
1105	1221	1333	757	904	1003	1055
1654	1819	1918	1440	1537	1625	1708
2208	2320		2042	2149	2245	2334
Mon 6	Tue 7	Wed 8	Thu 9	Fri 10	Sat 11	Sun 12
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
	17	57	135	211	249	329
521	611	657	741	826	913	1003
1143	1226	1305	1342	1417	1452	1531
1747	1823	1855	1924	1951	2019	2052
Mon 13	Tue 14	Wed 15	Thu 16	Fri 17	Sat 18	Sun 19
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
413	504	601	659	34	150	300
1057	1154	1251	1346	756	850	940
1618	1721	1840	1955	1435	1519	1559
2133	2224	2325		2052	2138	2218
Mon 20	Tue 21	Wed 22	Thu 23	Fri 24	Sat 25	Sun 26
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
400	454	544	8	46	127	211
1028	1113	1155	632	719	806	854
1635	1710	1743	1234	1312	1349	1428
2255	2331		1816	1849	1926	2007
Mon 27	Tue 28	Wed 29	Thu 30	Fri 31	Sat 1	Sun 2
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
302	400	507	620	35	151	315
948	1050	1158	1307	735	838	942
1516	1619	1745	1920	1412	1505	1557
2056	2154	2306		2038	2132	2226

Tidal Streams at the Heads — September 2012

RED italic times are slack water with EBB about to start (Flood Slack) which are the best diving conditions near the Heads.

<i>Mon 27</i>	<i>Tue 28</i>	<i>Wed 29</i>	<i>Thu 30</i>	<i>Fri 31</i>	<i>Sat 1</i>	<i>Sun 2</i>
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
302	400	507	620	<i>35</i>	<i>151</i>	<i>315</i>
<i>948</i>	<i>1050</i>	<i>1158</i>	<i>1307</i>	735	838	942
1516	1619	1745	1920	<i>1412</i>	<i>1505</i>	<i>1557</i>
<i>2056</i>	<i>2154</i>	<i>2306</i>		2038	2132	2226
<i>Mon 3</i>	<i>Tue 4</i>	<i>Wed 5</i>	<i>Thu 6</i>	<i>Fri 7</i>	<i>Sat 8</i>	<i>Sun 9</i>
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
<i>420</i>	<i>514</i>	<i>601</i>	35	110	144	216
1037	1125	1207	<i>645</i>	<i>726</i>	<i>807</i>	<i>848</i>
<i>1641</i>	<i>1720</i>	<i>1755</i>	1244	1317	1349	1420
2314	2356		<i>1825</i>	<i>1852</i>	<i>1918</i>	<i>1946</i>
<i>Mon 10</i>	<i>Tue 11</i>	<i>Wed 12</i>	<i>Thu 13</i>	<i>Fri 14</i>	<i>Sat 15</i>	<i>Sun 16</i>
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
250	326	408	457	553	<i>1</i>	<i>122</i>
<i>929</i>	<i>1013</i>	<i>1100</i>	<i>1151</i>	<i>1245</i>	655	759
1454	1534	1625	1731	1845	<i>1338</i>	<i>1428</i>
<i>2020</i>	<i>2101</i>	<i>2152</i>	<i>2252</i>		1951	2047
<i>Mon 17</i>	<i>Tue 18</i>	<i>Wed 19</i>	<i>Thu 20</i>	<i>Fri 21</i>	<i>Sat 22</i>	<i>Sun 23</i>
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
<i>243</i>	<i>350</i>	<i>447</i>	<i>539</i>	<i>628</i>	31	113
901	958	1050	1135	1216	<i>714</i>	<i>759</i>
<i>1514</i>	<i>1557</i>	<i>1637</i>	<i>1716</i>	<i>1755</i>	1253	1329
2135	2220	2304	2348		<i>1833</i>	<i>1914</i>
<i>Mon 24</i>	<i>Tue 25</i>	<i>Wed 26</i>	<i>Thu 27</i>	<i>Fri 28</i>	<i>Sat 29</i>	<i>Sun 30</i>
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
157	241	331	429	539	<i>39</i>	<i>212</i>
<i>845</i>	<i>933</i>	<i>1027</i>	<i>1127</i>	<i>1233</i>	658	818
1408	1454	1554	1717	1851	<i>1340</i>	<i>1442</i>
<i>1957</i>	<i>2045</i>	<i>2144</i>	<i>2301</i>		2009	2111

Tidal Streams at the Heads — October 2012

RED italic times are slack water with EBB about to start (Flood Slack)
which are the best diving conditions near the Heads.

Daylight saving begins 7 October 2012. All times have been adjusted for daylight saving.

Mon 1	Tue 2	Wed 3	Thu 4	Fri 5	Sat 6	Sun 7
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
307	409	500	545	9	44	215
922	1018	1104	1145	627	706	842
1525	1611	1650	1724	1220	1252	1423
2203	2250	2332		1753	1820	1948
Mon 8	Tue 9	Wed 10	Thu 11	Fri 12	Sat 13	Sun 14
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
245	315	348	426	510	603	33
918	952	1028	1107	1151	1240	706
1453	1525	1602	1646	1741	1846	1335
2018	2054	2136	2225	2323		1954
Mon 15	Tue 16	Wed 17	Thu 18	Fri 19	Sat 20	Sun 21
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
158	327	439	538	630	34	119
816	928	1034	1130	1217	717	801
1430	1525	1618	1707	1753	1259	1338
2058	2157	2252	2345		1837	1920
Mon 22	Tue 23	Wed 24	Thu 25	Fri 26	Sat 27	Sun 28
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
202	242	322	406	500	608	137
844	925	1008	1055	1149	1251	731
1417	1458	1544	1643	1759	1925	1359
2002	2047	2137	2238	0		2040
Mon 29	Tue 30	Wed 31	Thu 1	Fri 2	Sat 3	Sun 4
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
301	408	503	540	4	41	115
854	1003	1058	1139	624	704	740
1505	1601	1648	1715	1219	1255	1328
2141	2234	2320		1750	1821	1851

VSAG Dive and Meeting Calendar

Date	Activity Details Can swap between Sat and Sun depending! Dive sites adjusted on the day to suit divers and conditions.
4/5 August	Newhaven Philip Island — George Kermode and Pinnacles DC: Greg Richards 03 9783 4249
11/12 August	Sorrento/Queenscliff — Slack Water/Drift Dive and Outside Reef DC: John Lawler 0414 922 916
16 August	General Meeting @ Maori Chief — 8.00 p.m.
18/19 August	Sorrento/Queenscliff — Canberra and Slack Water Dive DC: Cheryl Lees 0448 863 455
25/26 August	Newhaven Philip Island — Dive Captains's Choice DC: David Geekie 0419 300 686
1/2 Sept	Sorrento/Queenscliff — Twin Bommies and Slack Water Dive DC: Andy Mastrowicz 0402 060 711
8/9 Sept	Sorrento/Queenscliff — Coogee and Castle Rock DC: Michael Kakafikas 0439 070 920
15/16 Sep	Sorrento/Queenscliff - Lonsdale Wall and Outside Reef DC: Graham Ellis 0403 070 920
20 Sept	General Meeting @ Maori Chief — 8.00 p.m.
22/23 Sep	Sorrento/Queenscliff — J4 Sub and Inner Corsair Wall DC: Alan Storen 0417 017 446
29/30 Sep	Sorrento/Queenscliff — Dragons Lair and The Caves DC: Lloyd Borrett 0418 170 044
6/7 Oct	Newhaven Philip Island — Crack Cave and The Pinnacles DC: Peter Briggs 0412 585 546
13/14 Oct	Sorrento/Queenscliff — Spectacular Reef and Drift Dive DC: Greg Richards 0408 287 754
18 Oct	General Meeting @ Maori Chief — 8.00 p.m.
20/21 Oct	Patterson Lakes — Uralba and Phil's Reef DC: John Lawler 0414 922 916
27/28 Oct	Sorrento/Queenscliff — North Wall Corner and Lonsdale Arches DC: Cheryl Lees 0448 863 455
3/4 Nov	Newhaven Philip Island — Pyramid Rock and George Kermode DC: David Geekie 0419 300 686

by Graham Ellis, Dive Calendar Coordinator, VSAG