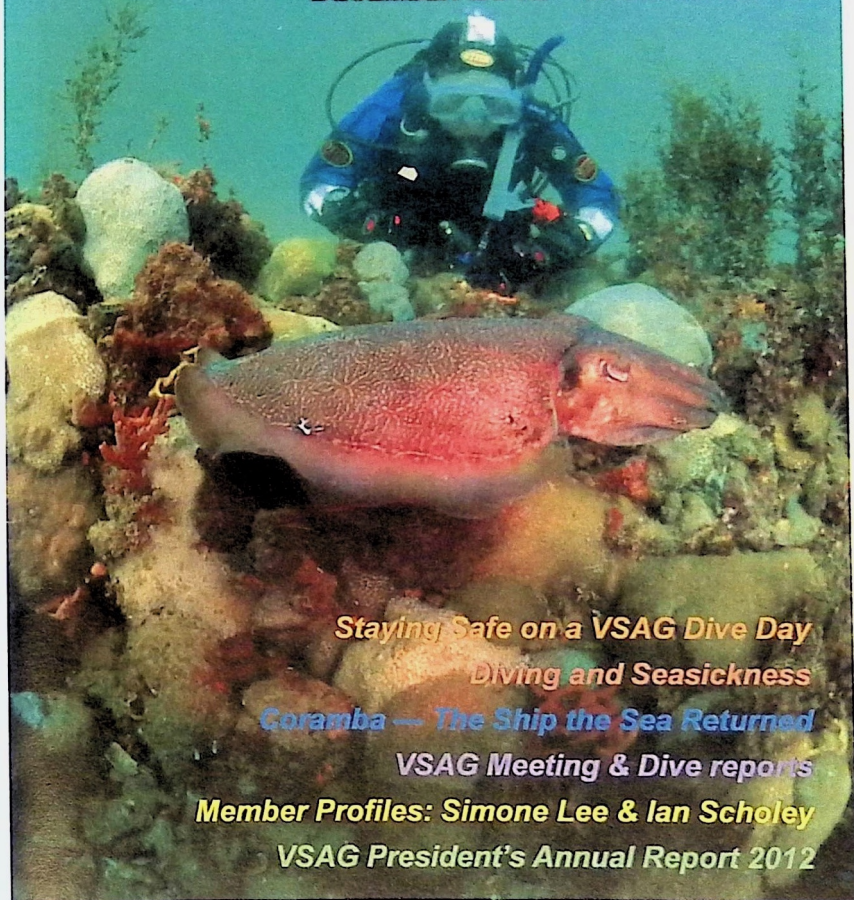




Fathoms

DECEMBER 2012 – JANUARY 2013



*Staying Safe on a VSAG Dive Day
Diving and Seasickness*

Coramba — The Ship the Sea Returned

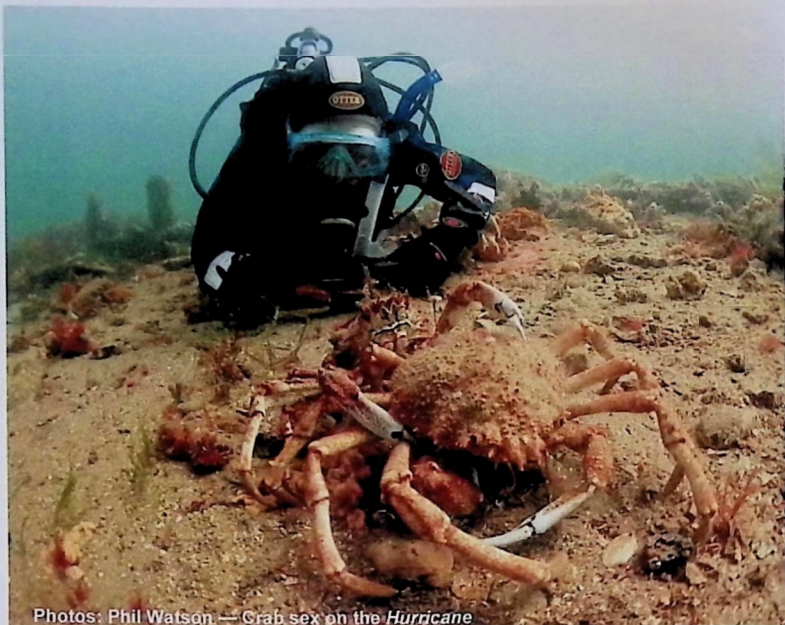
VSAG Meeting & Dive reports

Member Profiles: Simone Lee & Ian Scholey

VSAG President's Annual Report 2012

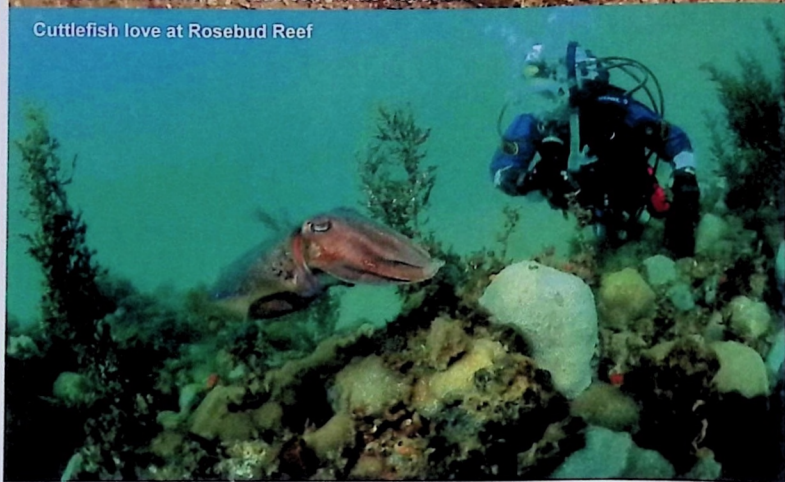
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Photos: Phil Watson — Crab sex on the *Hurricane*

Cuttlefish love at Rosebud Reef





Fathoms

Est. 1954 Official Journal of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group, Inc.

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VSAG General Meetings

Maori Chief Hotel

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

Editorial Submissions:

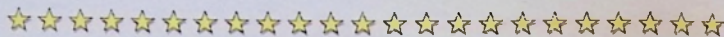
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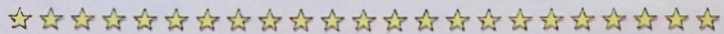
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VSAG Boat Owners Update

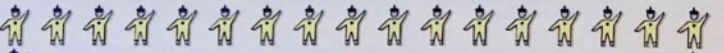
John Lawler and Lloyd Borrett have been working as a sub-committee for more than 18 months to put forward recommendations to the VSAG committee and boat owners for updated VSAG boat owner safety policies together with a comprehensive set of boat owner recommended guidelines and aids. A meeting of VSAG boat owners held on 24 October 2012 to present the results and get feedback was very positive.

The resulting set of updated VSAG boat safety policies, recommended guidelines and aids are now being circulated to all VSAG boat owners who regularly make their boats available for VSAG dive days. If you are a VSAG boat owner and would like a set of these aids, please contact John Lawler. All of the policies and aids will soon be available to download from the VSAG web site for every member to read and learn from.



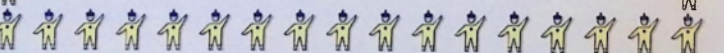
VSAG Dive Equipment Box

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



Firstly, a huge apology. What with a whole heap of family issues, project commitments and the opportunity to go wreck diving at Bikini Atoll, I was unable to get the October–November 2011 edition of *Fathoms* published. So your membership subscription wasn't missing in action, I was. What this means is that we have plenty to cover in this edition.

VSAG Xmas Party 2012

Cheryl and I were honoured to host the VSAG Xmas party at our home on Saturday 24th November. We had a great time, and I got the impression those who attended did as well. And blow me down, if I didn't finally take out first prize in the VSAG Xmas raffle, only to find no Sonar wet suit was on offer this year. Bugger!

Cheryl and I spent Sunday in recovery mode. A very late start to the day, only to spend the rest of the day doing very little. Just some quality down time together.

Bikini Atoll Dive Expedition

I did manage to get through all of the family issues in time to be able to finally go on a much anticipated diving expedition to Bikini Atoll on the liveaboard MV *Windward*. The wreck diving on the unique sunken nuclear fleet warships was quite simply magnificent.

We did two dives on the German heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* (including some penetration) at Kwajalein Atoll. Then at Bikini Atoll we did seven dives on the huge USS *Saratoga* aircraft carrier (including some penetration, plus a bow to stern and back dive), two dives on the amazing Japanese battleship *HIJMS Nagato* with its massive 16 inch guns, plus dives on the USS *Arkansas* battleship, USS *Anderson* and USS *Lamson* destroyers, USS *Apogon* and USS *Pilotfish* submarines, and USS *Carlisle* attack transport.

As I'd been trying to get there since 2007, I had huge expectations about diving at Bikini Atoll, and I wasn't disappointed in any way. Before I even left the place I was already working on how I could get back there again ASAP. I'm now a tour leader for a October 2013 expedition — see <http://bit.ly/KPoCkO>.

Only twelve divers can go (including the two tour leaders) and there are only three spots still left. So if you'd like to join me diving this bucket list destination, considered by most to be the world's top wreck diving location, please book now.

Best Regards, Lloyd Borrett. ❖

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To email all VSAG committee members: committee@vsag.org.au

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

by Lloyd Borrett, VSAG.

The following is a summary of main points raised at the August through November 2012 committee meetings.

- Updated VSAG boat safety policies, recommendations and aids approved.
- Alex Ivanov was granted 'honorary membership' for 2012-2013 due to his health issues so that he could be 'kept in the loop'.
- Committee agreed to purchase a number of Nautilus Lifeline waterproof marine radio and GPS with distress features for use by the club and for sale to members.
- Club to replace stolen DAN first aid kit.
- Trevor Williams to review the points system used to determine the VSAG Club Member of the Year award and make recommendations to the committee.
- Cash reserves of the club as at 11 October 2012 were \$15,629.40.

The following people retired from the VSAG committee at the September 2012 AGM:

- Mick Kakafikas
- Andy Mastrovicz
- Greg Richards

We thank them one and all for their great service to the club.

At the September 2012 AGM, the following people joined the VSAG committee:

- Peter Galvin
- Trevor Williams

On the page six you can see the full makeup of the committee and the various positions people have taken on since the October 2012 committee meeting.

VSAG welcomes new members

Would all VSAG members please extend their welcome to the following new members and help them settle into VSAG's unique culture:

- Hyeonji Kim (Aug 2012)
- Ian Scholey (Sep 2012)
- Simone Lee (Sep 2012)
- Denise Ridgway (Nov 2012)

You can read a member profile for Simone Lee on page 13 and for Ian Scholey on page 43, of this edition of *Fathoms*. ❖

VSAG President's Annual Report September 2012



It is pleasing to look back on the past year and note that we have had another safe year in diving, reflecting our commitment as a club to enjoying our recreational activity in a responsible and conservative manner.

Meeting the local diving needs of our members remains our major focus and there have been very few weekends where the weather and diving conditions were acceptable and VSAG did not schedule boat dives somewhere in Melbourne. There are articles in fathoms (such as by John Mills) where we have indeed 'given it a go', hoping we could find a location suitable for the conditions and most times we reap a great reward. (Quoting JL – 'you never never know if you never never go!'). Over the past year or so we have been fortunate that we frequently had more dive boats available than required for the divers booking in. It has been pleasing to see barriers reducing between the local dive clubs and we frequently mix club members on boats to optimize the diving opportunities.

Certainly the diving in late spring and early summer last year was superb, with great conditions above and below the surface. The conditions during this winter have not been so good. However our midweek divers report some quite good

dives recently so maybe things are improving.

Financially the club is in excellent condition. Reducing our banking charges, replacing the expensive hire of oxygen cylinders and not requiring formal auditing for ASIC have all contributed to improving our financial position, freeing up funds for future investments. Producing Fathoms remains one of our major expenses, costing around \$350 per edition. We have carried across \$1,000 in accruals to next FY year for publishing expenses not yet received for 4 earlier editions. Special thanks go to Carol and Peter Briggs for handling the Treasury function for the committee and club.

Lloyd and Cheryl have done a great job in continuing the Fathom's tradition passed to them by Alan Storen. However I would encourage all members to write up brief dive reports and submit to Lloyd or post them on the web as these mediums are superb ways to promote ourselves as a vibrant diving community.

We have continued to meet monthly at the Maori Chief Hotel and had a mix of 'imported' and internal presentations. It has been the committee's intention to ensure there is time at each meeting for social interaction and general diving discussion with very little time spent on

'general business'. We would like to see more short presentations by club members with a lesser reliance on external presenters. If you have suggestions for meeting topics or would be prepared to give a short presentation please see one of the committee members. Turning up at 7 pm to join other members for a meal is also a great way to keep in touch.

The Christmas Party is our major social event for the year and this was another success, this time at the Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron. Attendance was good and the great raffle prizes generated significant earnings for the club. It was great to catch up with so many club and family members. Planning is underway for this year's event to be held at Lloyd and Cheryl's new home in Frankston South on Saturday 24 November 2012. The visit to the Polly Woodside in April was also well attended. Thanks to JL for arranging this.

The committee meets monthly, the week before the club meeting to minimize the business input at the club meeting. This committee has been a pleasure to work with and we will miss the retiring members Mick Kakafikas and Andy Mastrowicz. Greg Richards is also stepping off the committee and his humour and incisiveness will be missed. In particular Greg's commitment to making the club nights a 'social' night will not be forgotten. We have been fortunate that the new members to the committee have slotted in so well and we look forward to 'new blood' at the coming AGM.

VSAG members have enjoyed several successful trips this year and we are starting to plan for next year. The Prom is looking to be open this November so Easter should be a 'go' next year. The Heron Island dive festival and the combined Tasmanian Clubs weekend were both successful trips that could be repeated next year. It is also likely we will plan a dive trip during mid winter to a tropical location. Please let the committee know if you are interested so we can choose a destination and program to suit those travelling.

We now have a 'VSAG Box' at The SCUBA Doctor dive shop at Rye that allows members to pick up an oxygen kit, first aid kit or even a trailer-parking permit for a day's diving. This has made it easier to provide the basic safety equipment needed for a day's diving on this side of the bay.

Improving diving safety has been an ongoing focus of the committee. We have purchased additional small oxygen kits and are now looking at sourcing some larger oxygen kits for diving in more remote locations. We have given thought to some basic standards for setting up boats offered for club diving and are also discussing some additional safety devices such as the Nautilus Lifeline and a defibrillator.

Overall, it has been another good year for VSAG and all we need now is some decent diving conditions and an early summer!

David Geekie. ❖

Meeting Reports

Thursday, 17 August 2012

Diving in Guam, Yap and Palau

David Geekie and Pam Dagley went on a dive adventure to Guam, Yap and Palau in July 2012. David gave an informative presentation at the August 2012 VSAG general meeting on the excellent diving to be had there, superbly illustrated with many photos he took while on the dive trip. ❖



Above: Diving with tourists in a submarine in Guam.



Above: David Geekie addresses the August 2012 VSAG general meeting.

Thursday, 19 September 2012

2012 VSAG AGM

At the 2012 VSAG Annual General Meeting we received the President's Report from David Geekie (published on pages 8-9 of this edition of *Fathoms*), plus a Treasurer's Report from Peter Briggs.

Mick Kakafikas, Andy Mastrowicz and Greg Richards finished their latest three year terms on the committee and Peter Galvin and Trevor Williams were appointed to the committee.

Then it was time to find out who were the winners of the prestigious VSAG awards. This year they were:

Club Member of the Year 2012:

After tallying up the points score it was daylight second as **John Lawler** was the clear winner yet again!

Literary Award:

Greg Richards judged **John Mills** to have written not only the best, but also the second best contribution to *Fathoms* for the year.

Fathoms Award:

Lloyd Borrett, the editor of *Fathoms*, presented the award to **John Lawler** in recognition of the magnificent support he gave throughout the year.



Above: John Lawler with his Club Member of the Year and *Fathoms* awards.

Below: Paul Tipping showing off his Wooden Weight Belt award.



Wooden Weight Belt Award:

There were a few serious contenders for stuff-up of the year, but **Paul Tipping** was the clear winner this year. ❖

Thursday, 18 October 2012

Sonar Wetsuits



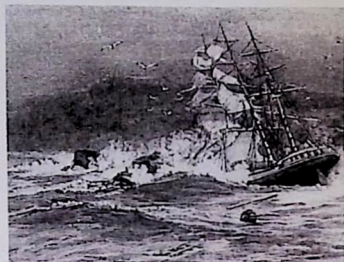
Melbourne based Sonar Wetsuits have been in business since 1988 manufacturing wetsuits and employing Australian families. Since the very beginning Sonar have had strong ties to VSAG. For many years Sonar donated a wetsuit as the major prize for the VSAG Xmas Party raffle. Plus they have offered healthy discounts to VSAG members who purchased their locally made Sonar wetsuits.

While Sonar now also sell imported diving gear like masks, snorkels, fins, knives, gear bags and accessories online and through an extensive dealer network, the core of the business remains the local manufacture of wetsuits.

A representative from Sonar came along to the October 2012 VSAG general meeting and spoke about how wetsuits are made, plus considerations about the selection of materials used to create a quality product. ❖

Thursday, 15 November 2012

Cataraqui Wreck, King Island



The wreck of the emigrant ship *Cataraqui*, which ran into King Island in June 1845, still represents Australia's greatest loss of life in a single disaster. Records show that 399 souls perished in this catastrophe.

In 1975, a small team of amateur divers made attempts to recover artifacts from this dangerous site, for display in the King Island Museum. VSAG life member Des Williams was a member of the team and at the November 2012 VSAG general meeting he gave a highly informative presentation on the early history of Melbourne, the impact this tragic wreck had on the young colony, plus the rescue archaeology attempts made in 1975.

Des also shared information about a lot of other shipwrecks that dot the coast of King Island. ❖

VSAG Member Profile

Simone Lee

Year joined VSAG:

2012

How long have you been diving?:

I started diving five years ago when I thought it would be a memorable activity to dive the *Coolidge* for my honeymoon!

First diving experience:

My open water dives at Port Noarlunga, South Australia. I never saw so much sand in my life. I nearly gave up after that experience, but I'm glad I persisted.

Favourite diving location in Melbourne:

Diamond Bay is one of the more memorable Victorian dives I've done and my first kelp dive.

Most memorable diving experience:

Seeing a whale shark and manta rays at Komodo, Indonesia.

Most unusual or amusing diving experience:

Going for the extreme underwater ironing Guinness World Record in February this year at Brighton Sea Baths with 101 other divers. We didn't get the record but it was a great day out.

Most valued piece of diving equipment:

My trusty Canon G12 records my diving experiences, so I can relive my dives.



Do you have a dive boat?: Sadly, no.

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

I've yet to dive the *JJ Sub* and I've been told that *Cottage by the Sea* is a must do!

Any diving words of wisdom:

There's no such thing as a bad dive, if everyone got back safe and sound.

Dive Reports

Sunday, 22 July 2012

Uralba and Phil's Reef

by David New, TSAC

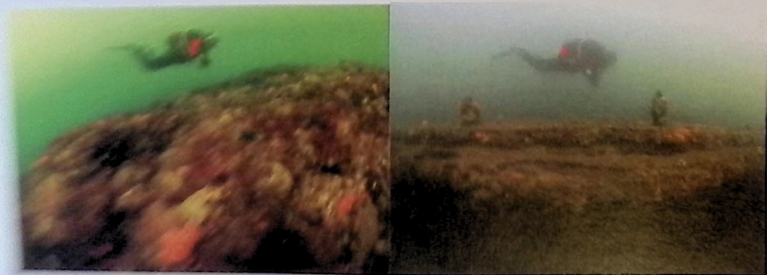
After a few early morning phone calls the site changed from Phillip Island to *Uralba* — potentially poor vis and colder water in the top end of the bay won out over the forecast swell, fog and possible show-ers, predicted for both places.

The shore-side activities don't come any easier than John's home base at Beau-tram's Water Yacht Squadron, and with everyone arriving a few minutes before the scheduled time we were quickly load-ed and launched. John put newly licensed boat driver Phil in the chair, and we pro-ceeded at a slightly slower speed than is

normal for *Signature 1*, through variable fog in the general direction of *Uralba*.

We didn't expect to see too many boats out there, but we could see 5 boats around the site as the fog thinned out. Shot the wreck, Phil and Hyeonji in first — with no guarantees on vis. By the time they surfaced the fog had cleared, the sun was out, and we could see the rest of the fishing boats around us. John, Ian and David did the second dive. The hungry ones had finished lunch by the time we got back on the boat.

New boat driver Hyeonji in the chair this time, back to "Phil's Reef" off Men-tone. The water looked a little green on top — but surprisingly clear near the bot-tom, and whilst this isn't a wreck, there was enough in the way of quantity and variety of fish life to keep us looking for near enough 40 minutes — not bad for



Left: Hyeonji Kim diving Phil's Pinnacle. Right: Hyeonji Kim on the *Uralba*.
Photos: Phil Watson.

mid winter and the top end of the bay. Plenty of rays hiding under ledges, an assortment of leather jackets, the old wives still around. And of course the sponges etc. don't go away in winter either. The top of the reef looked pretty sparse, so back to the boat for the 1 minute run back to home base.

Two quite different dives — but a great day out. ❖

12 August 2012

Diving with the Nautilus Lifeline on the Bay

by Simone Lee, VSAG.

Who

On JL's boat *Miles Ahead*: John Lawler, Phil Watson, Michael Ngai, Ian Scholey and Simone Lee.

In spite of the speculation on the weather during the week, we rocked up to the Rye boat ramp with a fairly clear sky and flat seas.

Dive One: Rosebud Reef

We put the gear on the boat and headed out. John let me drive out to Rosebud Reef. Ian and Michael lost out on the 'coin toss' so Phil, John and I geared up for the first round of diving after Phil gave me a quick dive briefing. Conditions were perfect with no wind and cur-



Photos: Simone Lee.



rent as we jumped over the side and followed the shot line down.

A lovely colourful reef awaited us at the bottom, which we could easily see with an excellent 10 m of visibility. A variety of sponges and algae peppered the craggy overhangs.

John led us along the reef, I followed behind and Phil took up the rear. The vis was so clear that we were easily at least three or four metres away from each other but could see each other perfectly. We

quite quickly reached the end of the main reef and started to explore the little reefs leading off the main one.

A highlight of the dive was when I spotted a cuttlefish trying to hide in a depression. I signalled to Phil and John, with John reaching out his hand to 'talk' to the cuttlefish. The cuttlefish then decided to lead a merry chase, along the main Rosebud Reef, across the sand and then from little side reef to little reef until he lost us.

We then returned to swim past the shot line and explored the little reefs there. We spotted another cuttlefish, even bigger than the first. The cuttlefish in general, have been incredibly friendly, probably as they have little human contact.

We finally ascended up the shot line after a long dive of 55 minutes. We popped Michael and Ian off on their dive before immediately scoffing down our lunches. They came up after a good long dive but hadn't seen the cuttlefish.

Dive Two: Hurricane

The wind started to come up again from the south about 20 knots on our way to the Hurricane. John decided to stay on the boat while Phil and I dropped to a depth of 10m. The shot line was well placed only a metre or so from the wreck. The wreck pieces are merely scraps of planks and other debris but make perfect

homes for the leatherjackets and seahorses that I saw there.

Phil and I slowly made our way along the Hurricane wreckage, and found the biggest cowfish we'd ever seen. We also found some nudibranchs we hadn't seen before and some crabs having 'a good time'. Phil was cheeky and kept poking the male crab, but the crab only waved at Phil weakly without losing his hold on the female crab.

After 45 minutes Phil and I got back up to the surface to find the 'Miles ahead', miles away. Luckily Phil had his new purchase, the Nautilus lifeline, which did look like a toy, but turned out to work like a proper radio. He got John on channel 74 and told him we were at the buoy.

Michael and Ian then had their turn in the water to explore the Hurricane or 'Ian's wreck'. They had an hour long dive, which must have felt really long to Michael who had only recently come back from the lovely warm waters of the Philippines.

We then raced back to the Rye boat ramp so we could get Phil back home in time for his son's birthday party. All in all, it was a fantastic day with great weather and exceptional dives with such good visibility. Thanks to all for the good company and to John Lawler for the generous use of his boat! ❖

Sunday, 2 September 2012

Coogee and Barwon Heads Reefs

by John Lawler, VSAG.

Who

JL's boat Signature One: Trevor Williams, Michael Ngai, Ian Scholey, John Lawler.

Peter's Fuller's Boat: Peter Fuller, Phil Watson, Hyeonji Kim. (Peter and Ian are non members. Ian has applied.)

Conditions:

Almost perfect! Sunny.. light North Wind... the rip flat on both exit and entry... very safe and comfortable.

Dive One: Coogee

John and Michael to dive first up (or down), viz milky to 20 metres and 10 metres on the bottom and around the wreck... massive boarfish (apparently one of two resident fish), schooling fish around the stern and one large crayfish.

By far still one of the prettiest wrecks on offer to Victorian divers... hard to beat for colour and intrigue! The two huge boilers a reminder of the "days of steam".

Next Trevor and Ian... several minutes into the dive, divers return to the buoy as Trevor had an equipment malfunction with the inflator hose on the BC.

Dive Two: Barwon Heads Reefs

John and Michael first to dive on a reef that looked good on the sounder... but only after a swim over sand did we find a small bommie... two male crays were out walking and were bagged... fish life almost non existent here... this was a poor dive but Michael in good spirits was just "happy to get wet".

More soundings and up comes excellent territory on the sounder, prompting Ian and Trevor to try the site. (Trevor used my BC.) They had a good 45 minutes here and came up excited at the experience... at the end of the dive found themselves on the top of a bommie just a few meters from the surface.



Photo: Phil Watson — Chimney Rock.

Shot had snagged so Trevor offered to bounce dive and retrieve, which by his assessment still gave him two dives for the day!

The divers from Peter's boat found and dived "Chimney Rock".

The day was closing in so a run back to Sorrento was quick and smooth... a slight detour to the "Lady Cheryl" sunken fishing trawler at Point Nepean and the top of the gantry is still protruding out of the water.

Onto Portsea where the water at high tide is severely lapping over the base of the sand bags on (what was) Portsea beach and green growth is evidence that this has been going on for quite some time. Global warming for sure!

A very fine, happy and safe dive day... a round journey of 50 km on the boat.

Departed my home at 7 am and after wash down at BMYS arrived back home around 6.45 pm... round drive trip 190 km and 3 hours. Two tank fills at The Scuba Doctor took just 25 minutes.

After unloading and washing all dive gear and cooking crays, packing up etc. dinner was on at 8.15 pm... hot shower and sleep so welcome! ❖

Saturday, 20 October 2012

Uralba and Phil's Reef

by *Michael Sesin, VSAG.*

Who:

Christine Reynolds, David Reinhard, Graham Ellis, Michael Sesin and John Lawler meet at BYMS thanks to John's membership.

Dive One: *Uralba*

Gearing up and launching was easy at this venue. John did not feel up to diving this day but was good enough to supply his boat and expertise. As we pulled out and headed towards the *Uralba*, the day looked promising, a little lumpy and slightly overcast as expected. When we arrived, the site was occupied by snapper fishermen. We informed them of our intent to dive, and proceeded to gear up and, luck would have it, they moved on, giving us a clear dive site.

Buddy pairs were David and Christine, and Graham and myself. We were first over the side and down the shot line which was bang on, and not more than an arms length away I spotted a brand new SARCA anchor and chain. With the help of Graham, the anchor was salvaged, (and looks good on my boat).

Viz estimated at 3 metres, give or take, depending on your eye sight, water temp about 13.2 deg C, and depth 18.2 metres.

General info about the *Uralba*

(copied from John Lawler's email intro to the club dive)

- The *Uralba* was built in 1942 at Tuncurry NSW.
- Wooden hulled coal burning work horse.
- Gross tonnage approx 602 T.
- 155 ft long and 36 ft wide.

Scuttled off Carrum 5 November 1971 to form an artificial reef.

There have been splendid write ups on the *Uralba* in Fathoms August 2012 and presented in a far better way than I could do, so I am not going to repeat a lot of info.

Diving the *Uralba*

There were a number of sea horses and pike in amongst the wooden structure which is mostly intact with exposed beams. On the surface we found that Christine and David had a profitable dive as well by finding a relatively new anchor and a stainless steel burly cage. All in all a very good and enjoyable dive, and recommended to be done again.

Lunch break and weather improved, flattened out and sunshine.

Dive Two: Phil's Reef

Then off to Phil's Reef. Depth 7.4 meters, viz 6 metres, water temp 14.8, nothing like a bit of warmth. The reef has plenty of marine life - a school of curious

Old Wives, some Morwongs, plenty of Sting Rays and lots of variety of marine growth, with good viz, a photographers delight.

As we were sitting and waiting for Christine and David to surface we spied a large pod of dolphins with lots of activity including full aerals Christine and David made it just in time. How about that for a great days diving? ❖



Photo: David Reinhard — Phil's Pinnacle.



Photo: David Reinhard — Christine Reynolds surfaces at Phil's Pinnacle.

Sunday, 11 November 2012

Rob's Reef and Scallop Drift

by *Christine Reynolds, VSAG.*

The day started at a leisurely pace at 10am with the promise of a beautiful day of 26 degrees. Having hurried along to The Scuba Doctor to refill empty tanks, I made it to Sorrento Boat Ramp with no one else in sight. That would be a first!

Eventually I was joined by our new prospective member Steve Vadja, Benita McDonough, our Boat Captain for the day John Lawler, and Dive Captain Trevor Williams.

We loaded our gear into John's trusty Haines Signature and headed out from Sorrento with a light wind and slight seas less than 0.5 metres to our first dive site which was Rob's Reef. John had timed the dive perfectly to coincide with a flood slack. One cargo ship transited the heads at 11:45 am with no other shipping in sight for several hours. Perfect!

We buddied up and geared up and entered the crystal clear water leaving John to manage the boat. John had picked the perfect spot, the perfect time and perfect weather. What a Boat Captain! What could be better? Hats off to you, John!

Rob's Reef is a very pretty dive with interesting bottom formations, colourful

sponges and fish life. Even the odd cray if you're lucky. The crystal clear water presented excellent photographic opportunities for the camera enthusiast and it was so clear John could see us from the boat which was 18 metres above us. I believe one of the formations looked like the remnants of a very encrusted skeleton of a wreck. Perhaps someone could shed some light on that.

As luck would have it, my dive computer decided to pack up and it was very comforting to be in the company of a very experienced dive professional such as Trevor Williams. Trevor made sure that everyone was safe, that everyone enjoyed the dive and were not disadvantaged by my equipment malfunction, and that I didn't miss out on the dive or my safety stops. With Trevor's help I was able to complete two dives for the day even without my computer. Many thanks, Trevor.

We were all able to relax and enjoy our lunch while John entered the water for a drift dive. Trevor put another of his many skills into action as Boat Captain as we pursued John's surface buoy and collected him some 2 kilometres away from where he started. I am sure he gave all the crays a scare and he surfaced with a magic find of a 20 mm cannon missile from by-gone days. How lucky can you be?

With John safely back on board the decision was made to do a scallop drift close to Rye and no one came up empty handed. Scallops and Garlic Prawn Fettucine with a glass of Moscato, the perfect ending for a perfect day on Port Phillip Bay!

Many thanks to John for the use of his boat and his well organised dive day and to Trevor for being the perfect Dive Captain. Looking forward to diving with you both again. ❖

Award for 20 Years of Service

A special award was presented to Andy Mastrowicz at the November 2012 general meeting in appreciation of his dedication and more than 20 years of service to the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group (VSAG). ❖



Photo: Andy Mastrowicz receiving the special service award from Alan Storen.

Safety In Diving

Diving and Seasickness

Q: Every time we go on diving trips, my girlfriend has to take anti-seasickness pills to avoid vomiting during boat rides. These pills cause drowsiness and I was wondering if it is safe to dive under such conditions? Most doctors in clinics tell me that she should avoid heavy work because she is feeling drowsy. Is it dangerous to go diving when feeling drowsy? If not, what are other options available to prevent seasickness?

DAN: Seasickness is a great menace, especially for scuba divers. Diving demands a clear head and feeling nauseous in the water is distracting and unsettling. Vomiting causes dehydration, which increases fatigue and the risk of decompression illness. Vomiting in the water with a regulator in the mouth can result in blockage of the regulator, inhalation of water and anxiety, which can lead to panic. It is advisable not to go diving if suffering seasickness.

To avoid seasickness I recommend taking promethazine, a sedating antihistamine, the night before diving. Its anti-nausea effects last longer than the sedative effect. On the morning of diving, I then recommend taking hyoscine an hour before going out on the boat. This is generally well-tolerated but can cause drowsiness, dry mouth and blurred vision. It is important for each diver to trial these

medications well before going on a diving trip to ensure that one's individual reaction is not excessive.

Any diver using these medications should avoid deeper diving as such medications can enhance the effects of nitrogen narcosis. It is important to be aware of this, and ascend to shallower depths if narcosis becomes apparent.

Answer provided by Dr John Parker, who is a Diving physician and Senior Dive Medical Consultant for DAN Asia-Pacific.

As a diver it's important to be prepared for unexpected diving accidents and illnesses. Being a Member of the Divers Alert Network (DAN) mean 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 are the experts in diver accident management. DAN provides Members with Worldwide Emergency Evacuation Coverage and offers Dive Injury Insurance Plans that cover treatment and certain other costs associated with a covered diving accident.

DAN coverage really is as essential as your mask, fins and air! From less than AUD\$6 a month, can you afford not to be a DAN Asia-Pacific Member? To learn more, visit www.danasiapacific.org ❖

Staying Safe on a VSAG Dive Day

by Lloyd Borrett, VSAG.

The Victorian Sub-Aqua Group (VSAG) takes its motto of "Safety in Diving" seriously. We have certain codes for safe diving, make recommendations to members and boat owners about equipment, plus provide additional safety equipment for member use. But there is only so much VSAG can do. Ultimately, your safety on a VSAG dive day comes down to your attitude and decisions.

Since joining VSAG back in 2006, I've always considered it my responsibility to

do everything I can to ensure my safety out on a VSAG dive day. This started with adjusting some elements of my dive gear so as to be more suitable for diving from small boats, plus getting some extra dive kit. But more importantly, I also took it upon myself to learn more about small boat diving, plus many other aspects of diving safely.

Listen to the Safety Briefing

Many of the VSAG boat owners give a **Safety Briefing** before they head out. It's there for a reason. Even on an airline, passengers are asked to pay attention no matter how frequent a flyer you are, because although the brief appears



Photo: David Reinhard — John Lawler's boat *Miles Ahead*, 1 August 2012.



Lloyd Borrett gives a boat safety briefing aboard *Raydon*.

consistent, there are subtle differences between each aircraft.

Now compare that fact with the different dive boats you have been on. Things can happen remarkably quickly at sea and being able to remember where the life-jackets are, or even just the O2 kit for a DCI incident, will help you respond quickly and in a controlled manner.

Having listened to the Safety Briefing, it can be helpful to run through in your mind some simple 'what if' scenarios so that you better imbed the Safety Briefing in your mind.

Buoyancy Control

Scuba diving has three essential skills: breathing, buoyancy control and surfacing before the gas supply runs out. All other skills are add-ons, although they will make any dive more comfortable and safer. Of the three major skills, breathing will have been mastered prior to scuba

training, and surfacing before the gas supply runs out should be fairly easy to master. **The major skill to learn and keep monitoring is buoyancy control.**

How do you decide if your own buoyancy control is good? Do you sink or ascend if you stop finning? Are you known to kick silt up? Can you ascend a shot line without holding on? Can you hold a 3 or 5 metre stop at the end of the dive, with low cylinder contents?

Here's a simple test. Swim horizontally at an underwater object. If you breathe in, you should rise slightly, and if you breathe out, you should sink slightly. Do you?

Does it matter? Well, **many diving incidents have deficient buoyancy at their basis.** So yes, it matters!

I record the gear I use and the weight I'm using for **every** dive in my logbook. Thus I can easily lookup what weight I should need for different dive configurations.



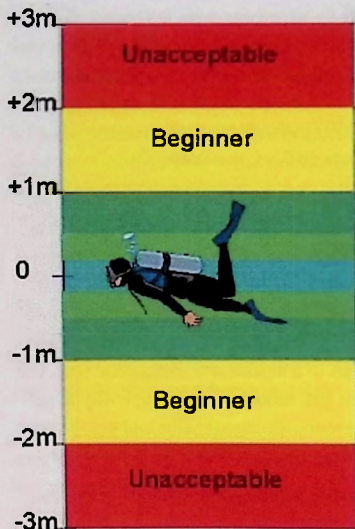
This is a buoyancy control exercise, not meditation. Try it sometime.

Then I check my buoyancy and trim in the water. If I think it's a bit off, I make a mental note to do a **proper buoyancy check at the end of the dive**. With 50 bar left in my cylinder(s) (I'll dump air to achieve this), I want to be neutrally buoyant at 3 metres with no air in my BCD. If that's possible, then my ballast weight is correct for the dive configuration I'm using. Of course, if you're in a dry suit, you also need to have very little air in your dry suit. Just enough to prevent pinching. No more.

I'm steadily getting better at this buoyancy control lark. What I find helps is **setting goals**. I'm getting close to being 100% confident I can maintain a position in the water +/- 0.5 metres no matter what happens. Eventually I expect to be able to do better than this and get to +/- 0.2 metres, even in very stressful situations where dive buddies are panicking, whilst multitasking (which of course for any bloke is virtually impossible even when on dry land!), gas switching, shutdown drills at a 3 metre stop, mask clearing, and deploying DSMBs. But it's going to be a long process to get there.

First rule is to try to keep breathing normally, instead of falling into the trap of holding your breath when concentrating on a task.

And you need to be progressive. Don't try and maintain your buoyancy within too tight a range at the beginning. Aim



Buoyancy control range chart.

for +/- 1 metres at first. Then +/- 1 - 0.5 metres, and finally +/- 0.2 metres.

Try and get it a bit better on every dive, but don't become obsessive (is it really me saying that). Of course, when you think you have really sussed it, something will happen to shatter your confidence.

Once you think you have a goal sorted, start to task load yourself by checking your gas, or writing on a slate with a reference in sight such as the bottom, or a marker on the shot line, and then moving on to deploying DSMBs.

Make sure your trim is correct. By this I mean adjust your weighting and kit configuration so you can sit totally horizontal in the water and totally stop finning whilst maintaining your buoyancy. It's more difficult that it sounds.

Good buoyancy and trim is so important because a relaxed and comfortable diver is experiencing very much lower stress levels, both physical and psychological. Consequently such a diver is much more able to deal with any unforeseen problems in a logical and methodical way, use less gas, reduce his/her propensity to suffer many diving ailments and enjoy their diving more.

Diving happiness is fine buoyancy control and good trim. After all, one of the attractions for many in diving is the enjoyment of the feeling of weightlessness. The ability to move almost effortlessly in three dimensions once achieved properly, not only makes diving easy, but also allows you to do other things, like take pictures or resolve minor problems, without task loading.

Weighty Issues

I've seen a few VSAG divers who have problems keeping a weight belt on. A suitable weight harness is an effective solution, provided you take into account how it needs to be used when diving from small dive boats.

When I started diving I used a weight harness instead of a weight belt, as I couldn't get a weight belt to stay on my hips. This meant I had to take off my BC before removing the weight harness. Not a problem on a charter boat where you climb out with everything on and take off your BCD while aboard. But a bit of a problem getting back aboard a small dive boat where you take off the BCD in the water. You suddenly become very negatively buoyant and are dragged underwater unless you can tread water strongly. Oops!

While the weight pockets in my first weight harness were able to be ditched in an emergency, this wasn't something you wanted to do at the end of every dive, because putting the weight harness back together was so complicated.

The simple solution was to add integrated weight pockets to my BCD and transfer enough of the weight to the integrated weight pockets. I could remove these weight pockets and pass them up. Then with my BCD off, the weight I had left in my weight harness was now such that I could still be buoyant on the surface. I then removed my weight harness and passed it up, before climbing aboard.

When my partner Cheryl Lees started diving, I found her a weight harness where it was possible to remove the two weight pockets of the weight harness and pass them up. And when my old weight



Lloyd Borrett's custom weight harness based on Apeks weight pockets.

harness finally needed to be replaced, I sourced Apeks removable weight pockets and had a weight harness made up by Oceansuits in Hallam to my own design. It's a beaut!

It's common practise these days for divers to put some of their weights into integrated pockets in their BCD. But if you consider the safety of the poor VSAG member aboard the dive boat, it's **good to be able to easily remove those weight pockets and pass them up.** After all, it's already tough enough hauling a wet BCD and cylinder out of the water while hanging over the side of a small dive boat. The added strain of integrated weights could give someone a serious back injury. So please configure and use your weight options with this in mind.

Of course, **divers should not wear weight belts when in the dive boat unless preparing to dive,** or wearing an appropriate buoyancy aid that will compensate for the additional weight.

Shed the Lead

Unfortunately a common factor in many dive incidents is that the diver was alive and on the surface following an incident but then has tragically sunk again. The simple removal of the weight belt can secure a person on the surface whilst waiting for further assistance and significantly reduce the number of these incidents becoming fatal accidents.

Underwater, the consequences of weight belt release in an emergency may be more serious because of the reduced ability to control the ascent. But it's a fact that ditching a weight belt will ensure a



Diver on the left having ditched his weight belt sits significantly higher in the water than his dive buddy.

return to the surface, where further rescue assistance can be provided. Many people would still be alive today if they had followed this simple action. DCI can be treated and the surface provides an unlimited supply of breathing gas, which may be preferable to the alternative.

Like all things in diving, **the skill of ditching weight does require some practice** to ensure that the weights are released clear of the body. All VSAG divers could benefit from occasional practice in controlled conditions in shallow (no more than chest depth) water.

Extra Weight

There are times when we add extra weight during the course of a dive that may have implications that we have not previously considered.

Marine Life: Collecting scallops, abalone and crayfish over a period of time on a dive means you may not appreciate how much additional weight they actually add until the time comes to ascend. Firstly,

avoid the temptation to attach the bag to yourself, as in an emergency it may be impossible to ditch quickly enough. Or at the very least, make sure you use a large clip and are totally practiced in removing it quickly. Secondly, carefully consider using a separate source of buoyancy for the catch bag to ensure you do not have to compensate for the additional weight. The simple action of attaching your DSMB to the bag before deployment should ensure its safe ascent to the surface and leave you free to concentrate on your own ascent.

Treasure: Few divers these days set out to deliberately recover artefacts from wrecks. If they do, then typically they go



Have a lift bag with you and practice using it.

prepared with suitable lifting bags. However, if you are tempted by an impromptu find and don't have the requisite bag, then the principles above still apply. Alternatively, if the find is too large to be raised on a DSMB then you might be safer marking the location with the DSMB line and returning when properly equipped to recover it.

Equipment: Carrying increasing amounts of equipment for particular dives can result in significant changes in your buoyancy characteristics. It's essential that you compensate for these changes.

Buoyancy Aids

We all know that the law requires us to wear a Type I personal flotation device (PFD) when boating in an area of heightened risk, like crossing the rip. (Yes, even though we're wearing a wetsuit or dry suit!)

There are a wide range of PFDs to choose from and the best ones aren't cheap. Boat owners have to have one for each person on board. They typically get good ones for themselves, and cheap ones for everyone else. The cheap ones provided for you to use are typically hard to get into and out of, plus uncomfortable. Such PFDs typically only meet the minimum safety requirements.

I value my life, so I made sure I got a good PFD for myself. I take it on VSAG



Stormy Life Vest Plus 180N is a multi-fit Personal Flotation Device.

dive days with me. I decided an inflatable one would be best and got a **Stormy Life Vest**. It's compact and easy to get on and off. I typically put it on before getting on board the boat and take it off before my first dive. I highly recommend you get something similar. I know most VSAG boat owners would appreciate you doing this as well.

When diving in winter it's nice to be able to put something warm on over your wetsuit between dives. So I got myself a **Stormy Life Jacket**, which is also a Type I PFD. It's a comfortable all-weather long sleeve jacket, which can be inflated when required as a PFD. Warmth and safety in one bit of kit.

Many dry suits, both membrane and neoprene types, are often considered to provide adequate buoyancy for the wearer if



Stormy Life Jacket 100N is a comfortable all weather jacket that can keep you warm out of the water and inflate as a PFD in water when required.

they fell into the water. However, this buoyancy is only provided if the suit's zip has been completely closed. Indeed, falling into the water with an open dry suit can be very dangerous. So it is essential that all dry suit zips are closed completely and checked by a buddy prior to moving away from the safety of the pier or mooring location. But remember, the law still says you'll have to put on a PFD when in areas of heightened risk, so consider getting your own PFD that fits easily over your dry suit.

Lifejackets do not last forever. You should inspect your lifejacket regularly for wear and tear, and have it serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. Out of season, your lifejacket should be partially inflated (which

removes creases in the material) and stored on a non-metal coat hanger. You can do this using the oral inflator.

First Aid Kit and Training

VASG has three DAN Pro Plus First Aid kits in circulation. These include a rugged orange Pelican case. I purchased my own at the same time as VSAG purchased theirs. Thus I have a comprehensive first aid kit with me in the car when heading out on shore dives and on VSAG dive days. If the dive boat I'm assigned to doesn't have a DAN first aid kit, I take mine on board.

Plus I've done a DAN Senior First Aid course, and I do regular refresher courses, so that I might just be able to remember how to use those first aid skills properly in an emergency. If you haven't done a first aid course recently, then you should, ASAP. It's not just good to have this as an essential skill for dealing with diving incidents, it has relevance for your day to day life as well.



DAN Pro Plus First Aid Kit.

Check the Weather and Tide Conditions

Always check the weather forecast and tide conditions before you set off on a VSAG dive day. Don't rely on the Dive Captain, Boat Captain or other divers for this. Be prepared to change your plans, or cancel the dive day, if you think the forecast is unfavourable, regardless of what anyone else says.

If you know what the tidal streams and swell conditions are, you'll be able to make better decisions about your dive.

There are links on the VSAG web site on the 'Diving Conditions' page to relevant web pages which enable you to look up this information. Plus we publish the tidal streams at the heads for the coming three months in each edition of Fathoms.

Delayed Surface Marker Buoy (DSMB)

VSAG rules require each of us carries a safety sausage, or DSMB, on all dives. Well I for one consider a tall DSMB and good reel as mandatory, and consider most safety sausages as barely adequate in Victorian diving conditions.

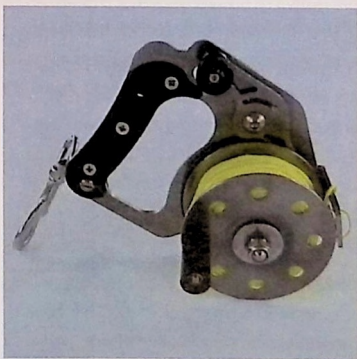
How often do you shoot your DSMB? I must admit that when I began diving I would avoid doing this if at all possible. I'd let my dive buddy shoot instead. But in an emergency, you're going to want to be able to use your DSMB and reel with-

out thinking. Once I realised the error of my ways I made sure I was able to.

I then became very aware of the deficiencies of the reel I already had and those reels I purchased when seeking a better solution. Eventually I can across the **Kent Tooling Diving Products ratchet reels**. These reels work brilliantly and are so much easier to use. They're not cheap, but are a quality product, built to last.

Later, when I started doing some technical diving, I began to appreciate the use of a good SMB and reel setup even more. I switched to a Buddy self-sealing, self-inflating DSMB which has a mini-cylinder, and also set Cheryl up with one when she started diving. These are just so much easier to use than conventional DSMBs.

Deployment is done by simply unfurling the DSMB and cracking open the mini-



Kent Tooling Diving Products ratchet reel.

cylinder. This negates the need for you to risk entanglement or free-flow when deploying a DSMB. It's just so cool, and results in a full stiffy every time.

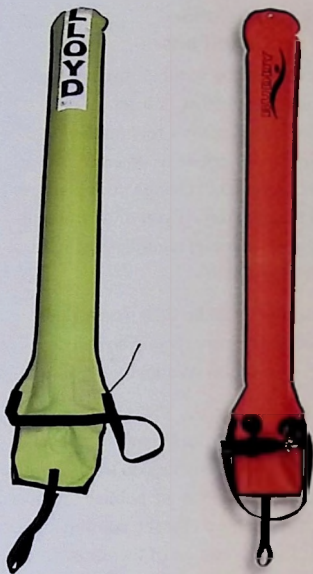
I now deploy my DSMB on almost every dive, unless I'm on a drift line or coming up the shot line. I've also switched from a reel with 15 metres of line, to one with enough line that I should be able to always deploy from the bottom (75 metres of line for me, 45 metres for Cheryl) as I find it's easier and safer to do it from the bottom than mid-water.

My DSMBs are marked with my name using **SOLAS radar reflective DSMB stickers** from DiveSigns in the UK. This is just a simple little extra safety item.

I want to make sure those on the surface know I'm coming up and where I am, especially when we're at busy dive sites, or ones where there's lots of boat traffic. Plus it makes the ascent easier and helps my dive buddy and me to stay together.

If I'm with a novice dive buddy, I'll deploy my DSMB and then pass the reel to my buddy. I find they become more relaxed and maintain better buoyancy control when they have the use of the reel and DSMB. I then just stay on station with them.

A deployed DSMB gives me the opportunity to send a message to the dive boat. I can attach a slate with a message written on it to the top eyelet of the DSMB.



AP Valves Buddy self-inflating DSMB with personal SOLAS sticker.

Of course you've got a message slate ready for this purpose, haven't you? On a night dive I can also attach a strobe to the top eyelet of the DSMB.

In some dive locations in the world, plus in more advanced diving, it's common practise for divers to have two DSMBs. A red coloured one for normal use, and a second yellow one with the word 'emergency' printed along it. The yellow DSMB is an emergency signal, to be responded to by sending down a cylinder of gas, or a rescue diver, or both.

I confuse those in dive boats that know about this distinction because my DSMBs are red on one side and yellow on the other (each colour works better in certain conditions). It's something I should fix, and something you should keep in mind when purchasing a good first DSMB, or a second emergency one.

A deployed DSMB also gives the dive boat a way to signal to me to come up faster, if required in a suitable dangerous situation. I can then plan my ascent accordingly and even skip the safety stop.

“What!” I hear you exclaim. “Skip a safety stop?”

Well yes. Just as there are times and situations when planned mandatory decompression stops are not a good or even safe idea, then there have to be times when 'safety stops' represent the less safe option.

Situations where there is a danger from shipping and the boat needs you back on board quickly, or it's impossible to maintain a consistent depth because of buoyancy problems, or in 'low gas' situations, it is often better to be safe and secure on the surface. Certainly, where sea conditions are such that a heavy swell means a significant risk of frequent pressure changes adding a decompression risk and control of buoyancy is difficult, then a direct ascent may be much safer.

Keep Your Mask On!

I've noticed an increasing tendency for some VSAG divers to remove their masks in the water. Some do it even at the beginning of a dive, others on surfacing after the dive.

Once fitted during your kit up, **keep your mask in place and a regulator in your mouth whenever possible.** This way you won't get an unexpected eye, or mouth, full of water. With your mask on at the beginning of the dive, you're ready to spot the shot line or buoy line.

At the end of the dive my regulator comes out of my mouth only when I have my BCD off and I'm helping to get it back aboard the dive boat. My mask stays on. Thus I can see if needed to look down through the water for my kit removal, or to help a buddy with kit removal.

My mask doesn't come off until I'm back aboard the dive boat. By following the same routine at all times, it becomes natural and second nature to keep my mask in place.



Keep your mask on!

Marine Licence

One thing that sometimes restricts VSAG's diving operations is the limited number of divers with recreational marine licences. So as to be more useful, I got my boat licence shortly after joining VSAG and I strongly recommend you do so too.

The master of the dive boat is an essential and integral part of any dive day involving boats. In nautical terms the master is deemed "Master before God" and their authority overrides that of the dive captain on the day with regard to the safety of the boat and its passengers.

By getting your boat licence you'll be able to legally master the dive boat while the boat owner takes a dive. Thus you can now be easily assigned to any of the dive boats. But more importantly, in an emergency, you'll better understand what to do.

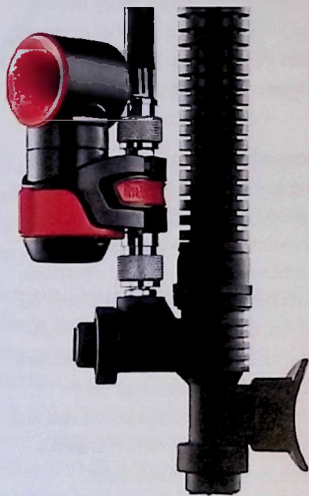
Rather than just reading the *Victorian Recreational Boating Safety Handbook* and taking the licence test, I'd recommend going and doing one of the boat licence courses. You'll learn a lot more than just what is required to pass the licence test.

Most VSAG private dive boat owners are more than happy to help you to develop your practical boat handling skills, once you have your licence.

Dive Alert

So you've surfaced from your dive and can see the dive boat, but they're looking the other way. (This seems to happen more often than we'd like to think!) Having a **Dive Alert Plus** fitted on your BCD inflator hose means that with one push of a button you can cause it to emit a loud piercing blast that can get you noticed from very long distances — reportedly up to 1.6 km away.

Plus the Dive Alert Plus is a great little underwater signalling device that makes a loud racket that can be heard by your dive buddy, even if wearing a hood. In underwater H2O mode, it makes a quaking duck type sound.



Dive Alert Plus signalling device.

Some charter and live-aboard operators make having one of these devices a mandatory part of your dive equipment. So please consider getting one. At the very least, have a whistle attached to your BCD, or stowed in a pocket.

VHF Marine Radio

Something you should do is to get your *Marine Radio Operator's Certificate of Proficiency (MROCP)*. Then you'll be licenced to use the boat's marine radio, and in an emergency you'll know what to do. It could save someone's life.

You only really need the VHF certificate of proficiency, but for the little extra effort involved, you may as well get the full MF/HF and VHF one. A group of VSAG and BSAC divers got together and did the course over a couple of evenings a few years back.

It also helps to communicate out on the water in poor conditions if you've learnt the phonetic alphabet — Alpha, Bravo, Charlie... etc. **A slightly higher pitch than normal in your voice will sound clearer over the radio.**

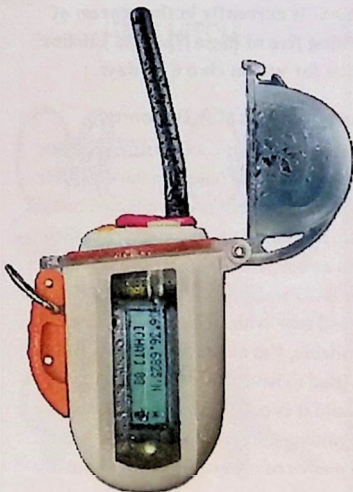
I've been out on small boats a few times where the boat's marine radio has failed. So a few years back I purchased a small handheld Icom IC-M33 VHF marine radio that is fully submersible and floats. It has been proven to be a valuable addition to my dive kit on a number of occasions.

Nautilus Lifeline

You may have heard about this great new diving safety device. It's a combined DSC capable VHF radio and GPS for divers in a compact, waterproof (130 metres) enclosure, not much larger than a smartphone. I liked the concept so much I purchased one as soon as they became available in Australia.

This compact device goes underwater with you. When back on the surface, it can function as a VHF marine radio on a pre-set channel, so that you can have two-way contact with the dive boat.

If the dive boat can't see you, you can ask the unit to show your GPS position



Nautilus Lifeline two-way VHF marine radio and GPS locator.

and then you can relay this information to the dive boat using the radio. Or you can put out a call on channel 16, the international hail and distress channel.

Finally, you can initiate a Digital Selective Calling (DSC) transmission of distress, sending and displaying an emergency message and your GPS coordinates on other vessels' marine radios within about a 15 kilometre radius.

Some live-aboard operators are now making sure each dive buddy pair has a Nautilus Lifeline. For VSAG dive days, the VHF radio of this unit can also become a backup handheld marine radio when set to the club channel 73.

VSAG is currently in the process of getting five of these Nautilus Lifeline units for use on club dive days.

Personal Locator Beacons

When small, compact Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) based on the 406 MHz digital system became available I bought one. It goes into a dive canister (which cost as much as the PLB) and is worn on my BCD waist belt. I've never had to use it, and now with a Nautilus Lifeline available, I'm even less likely to. But I'll be glad to have this extra safety device should it ever be necessary. It's capable of guiding the rescue services to within 50 metres of my position, anywhere in the world.



GME's Accusato MT410G Pocket Pro+ Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) with integrated GPS .

Of course having a PLB is a top of the range solution. Plus using a PLB close to shore in the bay is perhaps a bit unnecessary. **A low tech signalling solution would be an old CD to use as a reflector.** The best advice is to have more than one solution and to try and ensure that they are appropriate for different conditions or environments and are relevant to where you are.

A further consideration is to ensure that those who might be required to look for you are aware of the type of location aids you are carrying and other identification details (hood, suit and jacket colour etc.).

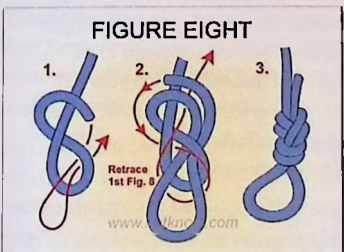
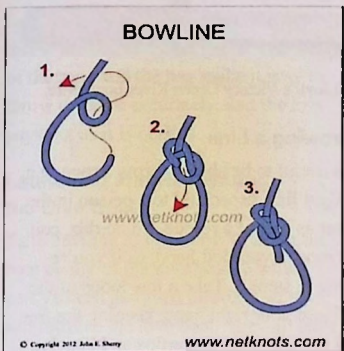
Finally, if you find yourself in a problematic situation, careful planning of when to deploy certain location aids can help achieve success. Delaying the use of a strobe until night is starting to fall ensures you preserved battery life until a time when it would prove most effective.

Working With Ropes

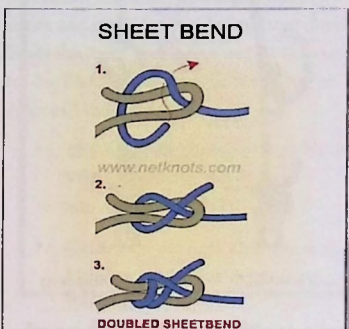
Ropes have many purposes on small boats. It's extremely useful if you know the relatively small selection of ways to tie rope likely to be used on a dive boat. Ways of tying ropes can be subdivided into knots, bends and hitches. So buy a book, or go online, and then learn the following.

Knots (ways of forming a noose, a fixed loop, or stopper in the end of a line):

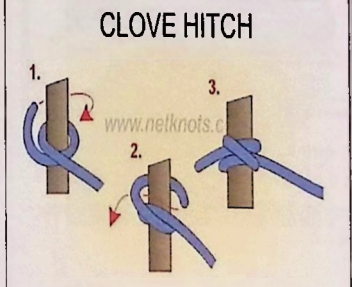
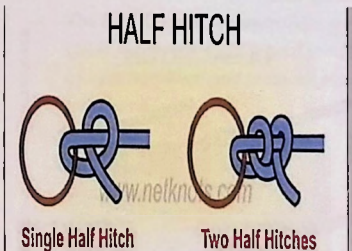
Bowline, Reef knot and Figure-of-eight knot.

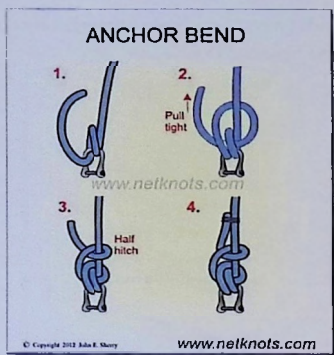


Bends (ways of tying two lines together):
Sheet bend and Double sheet bend.

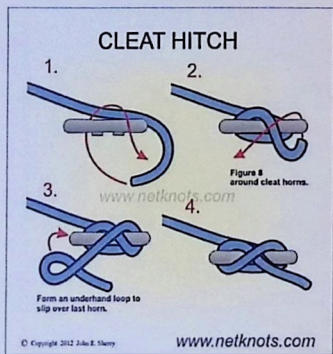


Hitches (ways to secure a line to a ring or post): Two half-hitches, Round turn and two half-hitches, clove hitch, anchor bend.





Dive boats often have cleats for tying off lines. Belaying means making a line fast by winding it around a cleat. So learn how to do this properly, finishing with a locking turn.



It is simple bits of knowledge like this that makes you much safer out on the water, and much more useful in an emergency.

Rope Knife

Also, please remember that ropes on dive boats, and the shot lines and buoy lines we deploy, come with inherent entanglement risks. Is your dive knife up to the task of cutting them quickly and efficiently? Oh, and where is it? The bottom of your dive bag is not much help if you are going down with the ship!

Did you listen to the Safety Briefing and thus know where the dive boat's knife is kept?

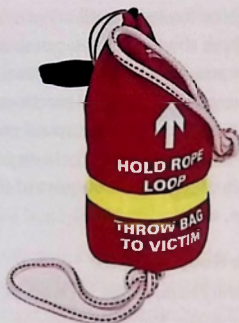


Lloyd's Victory Green River boat knife.

Throwing a Line

It is useful to be able to throw a rope in a straight line, especially to a person in the water as part of a rescue. To do this, coil the rope in your left hand, as if you're going to store it. Take a few loops of the coil into your right hand, keeping the free end towards your fingertips and keeping your left arm outstretched, fingers unclenched. Throw the coils in your right hand directly at the recipient. Their weight will make the coil in your left hand feed out smoothly. Do not forget to hold, or tie off, the inboard end of the line before throwing.

Throw bag lifelines designed for lifesaving purposes are often available on



Rope throw bag.

dive boats. To use this type of throwing line you simply hold the free end, and throw the bag at the recipient. The weight of the rope and the bag make it easy to throw the rope accurately, and the line pays out as it is needed.

Launching and Recovering the Dive Boat

Take the time to learn how to assist the boat owner of the dive boat to which you've been assigned to safely launch and retrieve the dive boat. They all have slightly different setups.

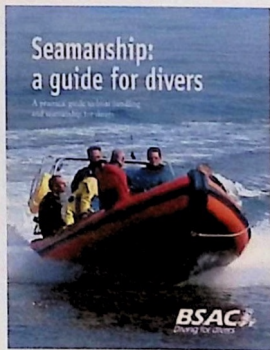
These operations are often a high stress time for the boat owner, so having safety conscious and careful helpers often makes the world of difference.

But if the boat owner prefers to do everything themselves, so as to maintain a safe routine, then please keep out of their way.

Dive Boat Safety

The more you know about good procedures and practices for diving from small boats the safer you'll feel out on the water on VSAG dive days. Some of the resources I recommend are:

- The *Safety in Diving* section of the VSAG web site. See <http://bit.ly/V6MTHF>
- *Guidelines for Safe Operation of Member Club Dive Boats*. See <http://bit.ly/TruPse>
- The *Diving Safety* section of the British Sub-Aqua Club (BSAC) web site. See <http://bit.ly/QMKbLV>
- The BSAC book, *Seamanship: a guide for divers. A practical guide to boat handling and seamanship for divers.*



VSAG is a Dive Club, Not a Charter Service

We're members of a great dive club. As with all clubs, VSAG expects club members to co-operate and help each other at all times.

When your fellow club members make their private dive boats available for you to dive from (typically at considerable expense to themselves) they don't expect you to treat them the same way you would a charter dive boat operator, who is providing you with a set service for a financial reward.

VSAG boat owners expect you to help out in any and every way possible, so

as to lighten the load on all concerned. So please think about what you can do to improve your dive kit and your small boat diving knowledge and practices. Be prepared, so that you can respond properly at all times, but especially in an emergency situation. **Become a part of the solution, not the problem!**

Who is Responsible?

We all truly believe that we want to, and do, dive safely. Yet the moment an unfortunate incident occurs, one of the first reactions is to question who is responsible for controlling the activity.

Well, when diving with VSAG, responsibility for "Safety in Diving" rests with



Photo: Phil Watson — Diver getting back on *Karingal*.

YOU, the individual member. Your first and overriding responsibility is to you and your dive buddy. Regardless of your background, training and experience, you are equipped with the skills and knowledge to make your own informed decisions for your own safety and that of your dive buddy.

All VSAG divers are encouraged to take responsibility to follow their training and restrict their diving to the limits of their qualification and refuse to be tempted beyond their limits by more experienced and qualified divers no matter how forceful or knowledgeable they may be. **If you do venture beyond your qualification limits, it's your responsibility.** No-one else is responsible for your decision and what might occur as a result.

As then VSAG president Don Abell put it back in 1991, **"If you need a group which will control you and tell you how to dive, if you want someone to be responsible for your diving, then VSAG is probably not for you."**

Safe Diving

No matter how much we all think we know what is involved in safe diving practices, it would do us all good to remind ourselves from time to time.

Regular practice and attention to pre-dive checks should minimise many risks before even entering the water. Don't let anyone rush your pre-dive checks. You



Buddy checks help to ensure safe diving.

should not be pressured either by your dive buddy, the boat captain, the dive captain, or the need to hit slack water. If someone does pressure you, politely tell them to back off. They'll understand.

Where we've learnt skills and practiced them in substantially different conditions, it is not always a simple matter of transferring those skills to the new environment. For example, moving from charter boat diving, to diving from small private boats. Please be mindful of this and practise your skills under the new conditions until you're comfortable with them.

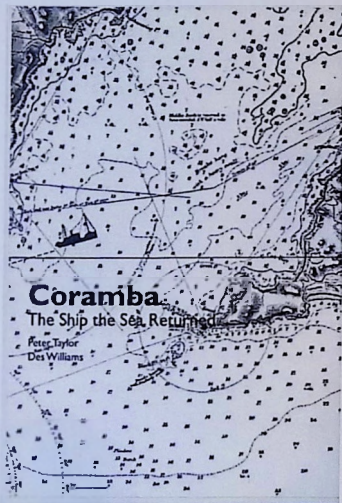
Stay safe out there! ❖



New Book Release!

“CORAMBA —The Ship the Sea Returned”

by Peter Taylor & Des Williams.



The Taylor and Williams co-authored book “CORAMBA — *The Ship the Sea Returned*” is a totally revised sequel edition of Des Williams’ 1984 book “CORAMBA — *The Ship the Sea Swallowed*”.

The wreck of the emigrant ship *CATARAQUI*, which ran into King Island in June 1845, still represents Australia’s greatest loss of life in a single disaster. Records show that 399 souls perished in this catastrophe.

This new 165 page edition contains, many new unpublished images of both the ship and its lost crew. Also included are interviews with crew family members, oral histories from witnesses and shipping company employees and individual cameo histories of most of the missing crew members. All material, photos and added research accumulated by Des Williams since his 1984 book is included. **Plus...**

SOE member Peter Taylor, writes of the fascinating and frustratingly long search conducted by the dedicated team of divers and researchers from the Southern Ocean Exploration Group, in their quest for the resting place of this mysterious and elusive shipwreck, which they finally discovered off Western Port in May 2011.

Many VSAG members were involved in the initial searches for the wreck of the CORAMBA and their efforts are also recorded in the book.

Price: \$25 per copy **plus** \$4 for postage.
To order: Peter Taylor, Scuttlebutt Press, 4 Rupert Street, Newport VIC 3015. Email: jpil@ozemail.com.au ❖

VSAG Member Profile

Ian Scholey

Year joined VSAG: 2012

How long have you been diving:

14 Years

First diving experience: I learnt to dive in Cape Town at the end of a 10 month overland expedition through Africa in a 10 tonne truck. I had looked on enviously when other people in our group had gone diving at Zanzibar and again in Lake Malawi and vowed to learn ASAP. My first few dives were at a site called Windmill beach at Simonstown, a short car ride from Cape Town. The water was a chilly 15 degrees but there was lots to see and I was hooked immediately.

Favourite diving location in Melbourne: I think we are very lucky with the variety of diving we have in Melbourne and I'm pretty happy diving anywhere. However if pushed to choose then you can't beat Lonsdale Wall.

Most memorable diving experience: An easy one, it has to be Beqa Lagoon, Fiji and several dives with 30-40 Bull Sharks as well as Grey Reef, White Tipped Reef, Black Tipped Reef and Tawny Nurse Sharks. After a few dives I was lucky enough to be allowed to get right into the thick of the feeding with my camera.



Most unusual diving experience: I guess I have done all the usual dumb things, I have rolled back off the boat in Popes Eye without zipping my dry suit up, I have done one dive carrying a large rock after forgetting to put my weight belt on and you have to laugh at yourself from time to time don't you? But it's my one time buddy Peter B who has given me the most unusual diving experiences. He is the type of diver who always comes back from a dive having found something. I have lost count of the number of anchors he has retrieved but his other finds include a pair of false teeth and a matching pair of fins found on two different dives.

Most valued piece of diving equipment: It has to be my Camera and housing, I never dive without it.

Do you have a dive boat: Yes I do. I have a 5m RIB which I bought specifically for diving. ❖

Diving the web

by Lloyd Borrett, VSAG.

Diving with Split Fins

Most people who criticise split fins have not actually dived using them and are just parroting what some other 'expert' has said. And I'd almost guarantee few of these 'experts' who have actually tried split fins would have taken the time to learn the different finning technique required get the best performance from split fins.

Yes, they actually require a different finning technique to work optimally. Although split fins work with a variety of kicking styles, you should adapt to a smaller range, more frequent, flutter kick for maximum performance.

The smaller-range, rapid flutter kick also keeps your legs within the slipstream of your body so that you punch a hole in the water that is only as big as your shoulders and your tank. Remember, less drag means more speed and less effort. There's a video online to show this at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21OobslhFRc>



VSAG on Facebook

Did you know VSAG now has a Facebook page? Check it out at <https://www.facebook.com/vsag.divers> and 'Like' us.



Scuba BBQ

Spotted this on Facebook.



I just want one. Perfect for seafood!

But it seems others have done scuba BBQs too. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6pVm1d_fA

for a YouTube video which shows a way more fancy version made in Mexico. This one has fins for the feet, snorkel for the handle, plus shark fin shaped vents.



I suppose you'd need to use a steel cylinder to avoid potential temperature issues with aluminium ones melting.

Anyone have access to a suitable cutting setup?

Home: Covered
Car: Covered

Are You?



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Can You Afford Not to be a DAN Member?

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*Only Membership provides up to \$100,000.00 Worldwide Emergency Evacuation Coverage. DAN Dive Injury Insurance is additional.



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 — December 2012

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

All times have been adjusted for daylight saving.

Mon 3	Tue 4	Wed 5	Thu 6	Fri 7	Sat 8	Sun 9
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
44	116	147	218	251	326	406
709	740	809	837	906	936	1010
1304	1336	1406	1437	1509	1545	1629
1827	1901	1937	2015	2057	2144	2241
Mon 10	Tue 11	Wed 12	Thu 13	Fri 14	Sat 15	Sun 16
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
453	553	121	251	404	503	553
1051	1143	707	830	948	1052	1146
1723	1831	1246	1357	1510	1617	1717
2351		1948	2105	2215	2315	
Mon 17	Tue 18	Wed 19	Thu 20	Fri 21	Sat 22	Sun 23
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
7	53	135	215	256	339	428
637	717	754	831	907	944	1025
1235	1321	1406	1449	1533	1622	1718
1810	1900	1949	2038	2130	2229	2338
Mon 24	Tue 25	Wed 26	Thu 27	Fri 28	Sat 29	Sun 30
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
526	52	204	309	404	451	531
1111	634	751	904	1005	1055	1136
1823	1204	1304	1409	1512	1608	1655
	1930	2032	2128	2217	2301	2340
Mon 31	Tue 1	Wed 2	Thu 3	Fri 4	Sat 5	Sun 6
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
606	16	39	114	149	224	259
1213	645	713	740	808	835	903
1737	1300	1333	1407	1442	1520	1600
	1804	1847	1931	2018	2108	2205

Tidal Streams at the Heads — January 2013

RED italic times are slack water with EBB about to start (Flood Slack)
which are the best diving conditions near the Heads.
All times have been adjusted for daylight saving.

Mon 31	Tue 1	Wed 2	Thu 3	Fri 4	Sat 5	Sun 6
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
606	16	39	114	149	224	259
1213	645	713	740	808	835	903
1737	1300	1333	1407	1442	1520	1600
	1804	1847	1931	2018	2108	2205
Mon 7	Tue 8	Wed 9	Thu 10	Fri 11	Sat 12	Sun 13
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
337		22	141	258	404	459
934	420	513	625	801	936	1050
1646	1011	1057	1158	1314	1437	1555
2309	1738	1839	1948	2058	2204	2304
Mon 14	Tue 15	Wed 16	Thu 17	Fri 18	Sat 19	Sun 20
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
546	628	707	129	209	245	321
1151	1244	1332	743	816	848	918
1705	1808	1906	1417	1459	1539	1619
2357	2446		2000	2052	2143	2234
Mon 21	Tue 22	Wed 23	Thu 24	Fri 25	Sat 26	Sun 27
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
357	435	28	135	245	348	437
948	1021	520	621	751	926	1031
1659	1742	1058	1144	1245	1356	1508
2328		1831	1927	2028	2126	2219
Mon 28	Tue 29	Wed 30	Thu 31	Fri 1	Sat 2	Sun 3
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
515	547	615	24	101	137	213
1119	1159	1235	643	711	739	807
1611	1706	1756	1309	1344	1420	1458
2305	2346		1842	1927	2014	2102

Tidal Streams at the Heads — February 2013

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

All times have been adjusted for daylight saving.

Mon 28	Tue 29	Wed 30	Thu 31	Fri 1	Sat 2	Sun 3
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
515	547	615	24	101	137	213
1119	1159	1235	643	711	739	807
1611	1706	1756	1309	1344	1420	1458
2305	2346		1842	1927	2014	2102
Mon 4	Tue 5	Wed 6	Thu 7	Fri 8	Sat 9	Sun 10
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
249	325	405	454	111	226	334
837	910	948	1036	601	735	917
1539	1623	1714	1814	1140	1302	1433
2155	2252	2358		1923	2039	2150
Mon 11	Tue 12	Wed 13	Thu 14	Fri 15	Sat 16	Sun 17
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
431	518	559	32	113	150	225
1035	1135	1226	636	711	743	813
1556	1707	1808	1310	1351	1428	1503
2252	2346		1901	1949	2033	2115
Mon 18	Tue 19	Wed 20	Thu 21	Fri 22	Sat 23	Sun 24
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
258	330	403	441	29	137	245
842	911	942	1017	529	641	824
1538	1614	1653	1736	1101	1201	1320
2156	2240	2330		1829	1933	2043
Mon 25	Tue 26	Wed 27	Thu 28	Fri 1	Sat 2	Sun 3
Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack	Slack
342	426	501	533	8	47	125
945	1039	1122	1201	603	634	706
1444	1557	1658	1750	1238	1316	1355
2147	2240	2326		1837	1923	2008

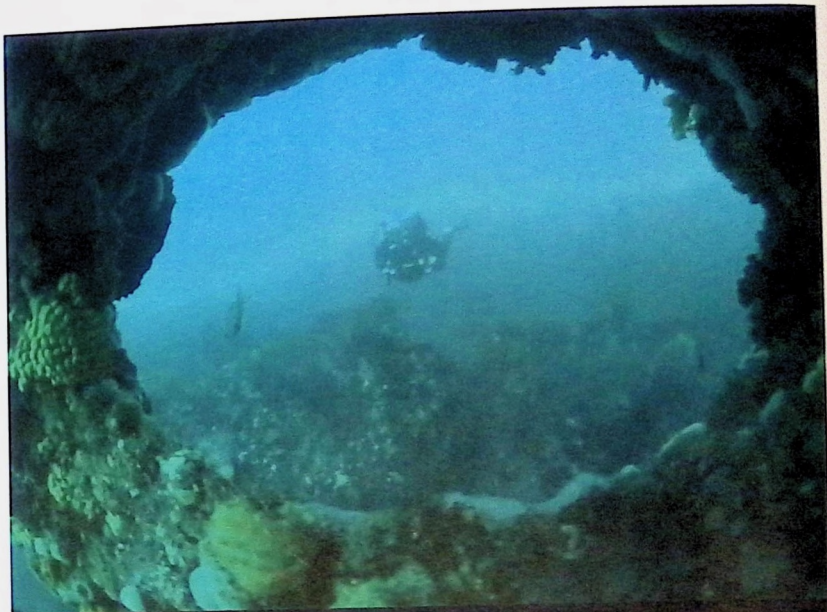
VSAG Dive and Meeting Calendar

Date	Activity Details Can swap between Sat and Sun depending! Dive sites adjusted on the day to suit divers and conditions.
8/9 Dec	Sorrento/Queenscliff — Eliza Ramsden and Popes Eye DC: Peter Briggs, 0412 585 546
15/16 Dec	Sorrento/Queenscliff — Coogee and Rob's Reef DC: Trevor Williams, 0404 069 572
20 Dec	General Meeting @ Maori Chief — 8.00 p.m.
22/23 Dec	Patterson Lakes — Uralba and Phil's Reef DC: John Lawler, 0414 922 916
26–31 Dec	Xmas Local Diving — TBA DC: Wait for emails
1–4 Jan	New Year Local Diving — TBA DC: Wait for emails
5/6 Jan	Sorrento/Queenscliff — Portsea Hole and Drift Dive DC: Cheryl Lees, 0448 863 455
12/13 Jan	Sorrento/Queenscliff - Rip Bank and J4 Sub DC: Lloyd Borrett, 0418 170 044
17 Jan	General Meeting @ Maori Chief — 8.00 p.m.
19/20 Jan	Newhaven, Philip Island — Pyramid Rock and George Kermodé DC: David Geekie, 0419 300 686
26/27 Jan	Sorrento/Queenscliff — Castle Rock and The Caves DC: Graham Ellis, 0403 070 920
28 Jan	Australia Day Holiday — TBA DC: Wait for emails
2/3 Feb	Sorrento/Queenscliff — Hot Spot and Spectacular Reef DC: Alan Storen, 0417 017 446
9/10 Feb	Sorrento/Queenscliff — Twin Bommies and Eliza Ramsden DC: Peter Galvin, 0417 061 564
16/17 Feb	Sorrento/Queenscliff — HIMAS Canberra and Chimney Rock DC: Peter Briggs, 0412 585 546
21 Feb	General Meeting @ Maori Chief — 8.00 p.m.
23/24 Feb	Sorrento/Queenscliff — Torpedo Reef Drift & North Wall Corner DC: Trevor Williams, 0404 069 572

by Graham Ellis, Dive Calendar Coordinator, VSAG



Photos: David Reinhard — Rosebud Reef, 1 August 2012.



Photos: Phil Watson — Chimney Rock