



Fathoms

JUNE 2013 - SEPTEMBER 2013

Cover photo . Ian Scholey

Boarfish Reef



VALÉ JIM AGER

Eleven VSAG Dive Day Reports

New Meeting Day & Place

Cape Jaffa & Wilson's Prom

Dry Suits

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Flood tide, superb vis, two marine biologists - Jan Watson & Myriam Preker.



Photos taken by Ian Scholey on The Pinnacles (Left) and the George Kermodé (above) at Phillip Island



Fathoms

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

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VSAG General Meetings

3rd Tuesday in the month

Meeting starts at 8.00 pm

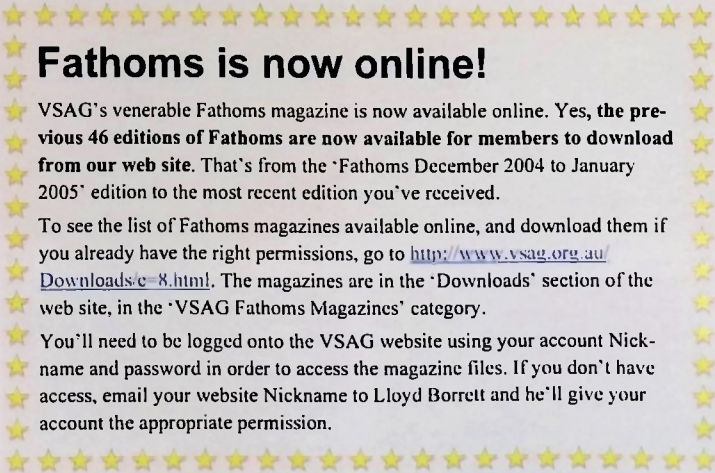
(Dinner starts from 7.00 pm)

Bells' Hotel

157 Moray Street

South Melbourne VIC 3205

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Fathoms is now online!

VSAG's venerable Fathoms magazine is now available online. Yes, the previous 46 editions of Fathoms are now available for members to download from our web site. That's from the 'Fathoms December 2004 to January 2005' edition to the most recent edition you've received.

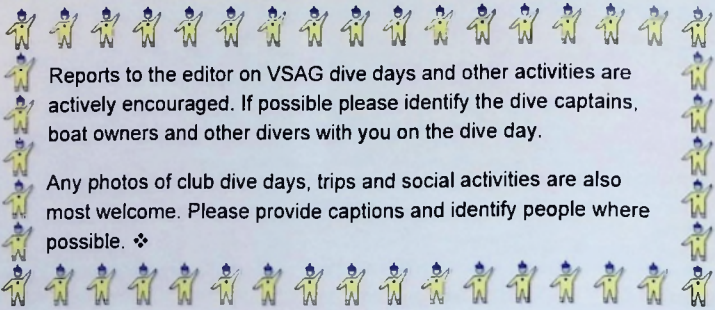
To see the list of Fathoms magazines available online, and download them if you already have the right permissions, go to <http://www.vsag.org.au/Downloads/e-8.html>. The magazines are in the 'Downloads' section of the web site, in the 'VSAG Fathoms Magazines' category.

You'll need to be logged onto the VSAG website using your account Nickname and password in order to access the magazine files. If you don't have access, email your website Nickname to Lloyd Borrett and he'll give your account the appropriate permission.

New Meeting Day, New Meeting Place!

VSAG will now be holding Monthly meetings at 8pm on the **3rd TUESDAY** of each month at **BELL'S HOTEL** —
157 MORAY ST, SOUTH MELBOURNE

All are welcome to join us for a meal at 7pm before the meeting
Tuesday Night Special—all meals \$14



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. ❖

VSAG Committee 2012–2013



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

All Members Welcome

Bell's Hotel, 157 Moray St, South Melbourne VIC 3205

Valé JIM AGER

1928–2013

by Des Williams



Whilst Melbourne scuba engineer/designer Ted Eldred has now been recognized by the Historical Diving Society as the inventor of the world's first, commercially successful, single-hose regulator, the *POR-POISE*, there was another Melbourne diving pioneer, who followed closely behind Ted Eldred, but outlasted Ted's production by many decades. That was Jim Ager, who, in the 1950's, turned his grocery store and transport business at 438 High Street Prahran, into a dive shop, which traded as the *Victoria Aqua Lung Centre*.

With assistance from the late Lionel Martin of Black Rock Underwater Diving Group and others Jim developed the unique *SEA BEE* scuba regulator. This original, Australian designed regulator had features later copied by many overseas companies. Jim manufactured robust, hard-working regulators through his company *AIRDIVE EQUIPMENT Pty Ltd* for 54 years! A record of continuous production, which surely could not be claimed by any other scuba manufacturer around the world.

The *SEA BEE* design was a single hose, two stage regulator which featured an upstream demand valve and a piston unbalanced first stage. The low pressure hose was long enough to be fitted to twin air cylinders, which were carried inverted by the diver who controlled his air supply by decanting air from one cylinder to the other.

Jim introduced the first Australian submersible pressure gauge with a unique protruding pin design. The diver could look at the calibrated rod and see his cylinder contents, or he could just feel it with his finger tips. Jim placed the exhaust valve in the centre of the second stage diaphragm, eliminating a separate exhaust system. It had a rubber front cover which resisted impact damage and acted as an exhaust cover. The front and back were held together by a wire ring clip, which allowed the diver to easily clean it. Jim also created a unique back pack, which consisted of a black vinyl harness and an inverted u-shaped tube. The tube contained weights that could be jettisoned with the pull of a ring at the open ends, the first integrated weight system.

The *SEA BEE* brand was very popular with both recreational and the majority of Australian commercial divers, as it was rugged and one of the best breathing scuba regulators in the world. *AIRDIVE* did not take to marketing outside the Australian region and as a result, Jim's operation was much smaller and more personalized than the diving equipment giants of today. *AIRDIVE* equipment was rugged enough to secure government contracts and the regulators were available with balanced or unbalanced reduction valves and a selection of LP ports. *AIRDIVE* also produced tank valves and many other diving equipment accessories, including wetsuits in the very early days of Australian sport diving.

While other sport diving equipment makers were finding accessories and buttons to add to their product, Jim was working to take them off. His product was not shiny, nor fancy, he did not sell the sizzle he instead sold the steak.

Jim was also one of the very early members of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group (VSAG), Melbourne's first diving club dedicated to the use of scuba equipment, which was formed in 1954. Jim Ager served as Secretary for the VSAG for many years in the 1950's and was a dedicated hard-working Committee man. He was a prolific letter writer and marketing man for VSAG, writing to introduce the club and offering its diver's services to organisations such as the Victoria Police, Olympic Games Committee (1956), CSIRO, Museum of Victoria, The Field Naturalists Club of Vic, Fisheries & Research Department, many yacht clubs and media organisations, including newspapers and the newly formed TV companies. Through VSAG he organised scuba displays (similar to today's 'try-dive' days) advertised through the media and held at the Melbourne City Baths, to promote the new, exciting sport of scuba diving. The VSAG Committee considered that the growing number of new scuba divers were much safer as members of a scuba club, under the guidance of experienced members, than off by themselves, completely untrained, using a brand new scuba kit. Jim Ager was a scuba diving instructor with the VSAG.

Jim Ager saw to it, in his post as Secretary that the VSAG maintained a very high profile throughout the Australian diving scene and it was recognized as one of the most influential and professionally organised private recreational scuba clubs, a position it still enjoys today! Jim's high profile and hard work as VSAG Secretary, also assisted his growing scuba diving equipment business *AIRDIVE*, which was in direct competition to both the Eldred/Batterham *PORPOISE* brand and imported twin-hose regulator systems, such as *US Divers 'Aqualung'* and Siebe Gorman's '*ESS-GEE*' from the UK. In the 1950's Melbourne was home to the world's only two manufacturers of single-hose scuba regulators, long before the system caught on around the world deposing the twin-hose system. The single-hose scuba system is now the accepted system which we all use today.

AIRDIVE was Jim's life, he had rejected an offer by *Scubapro* to purchase his business at one time, as he loved his work and could always be found at his factory, right up until he sold the business in 2010. Jim passed away on the 14th June 2013 and was buried at Springvale in a small ceremony attended by his family and a circle of his old diving associates. So, as we farewell Jim Ager, let's not forget the remarkable, five decade influence he had on the Australian scuba diving scene. Good on you Jim may you now rest in peace.



VSAG members farewell Jim Ager.

*L to R: John Lawler, Frank Coustley,
Des Williams and Gerry Dammer*



*Victorian Dive Industry representatives
at Jim Ager's funeral.*

*L to R: Danny Ryan, Bob Cumberland
and Warwick McDonald*

Meeting Reports

Thursday, 21 March 2013

Ross Island, Antarctica

by Lloyd Borrett, VSAG.

At the March meeting we had a very special guest presenter, Matt McArthur. Through a combination of dumb luck and determination, Matt found himself with the skills and the contacts necessary to land a place in a University of Otago research programme examining the effects of UV light on marine invertebrate larvae under the sea-ice around Ross Island.

Flown to McMurdo Sound by the USAF, housed in the Antarctica New Zealand run Scott Base, and equipped with all (well, most) of the mod cons a cold water dive team could wish for, they had a pretty rosy time of it compared to the pioneering divers of the area.

Machines straight out of Thunderbirds, gin clear water with visibility in the hundreds of metres, Weddell seals visiting the dive hut, skuas circling to see if his afternoon nap was terminal, penguins nicking stones from one another's nests — this summer visit to the ice fulfilled ambitions Matt had held since childhood and didn't require that he endure any of the sea-sickness, man-hauling, or scurvy

so common in the area just a century before.

Matt's presentation took in the history of human activity on Ross Island and its key role in many of the most exciting and most disastrous chapters of human endeavour in the Antarctic, the marine life below the sea ice and the evolutionary outcomes of the area's glacial history, and the methods and findings of the project in which we were engaged. ❖



Matt McArthur giving his presentation

Thursday, 18 April 2013

Diving the Nuclear Fleet at Bikini Atoll

by Lloyd Borrett, VSAG.

A few hardy VSAGers turned out for the April meeting to hear me bang on, yet again, about my October 2012 trip to one of the most challenging yet exciting pinacles of diving at the remote Bikini At-

oll. The presentation featured plenty of historical information and some news-reels from 1946, plus details of diving the nuclear ghost fleet with some well put together GoPro video footage. ❖

Thursday, 16 May 2013

Diving in Antarctica

by Lloyd Borrett, VSAG.

Relatively new VSAG member Sandy Webb was our guest speaker in May. Sandy has recently returned from an exceptionally long and expensive journey to the frozen world of Antarctica. Her highly informative presentation included some amazing photos showing what it's like to dive in the frozen world of the icy waters of Antarctica. ❖

VSAG welcomes new members

Would all VSAG members please extend a warm welcome to the following new VSAG members:

November 2012: Sandy Webb

December 2012: Stephen Vadja

March 2013: Bob Pavlich, David Goodwin and Michelle Doolan.

April 2013: Nick Blake & Tim Forster

May 2013: Ian Christiansz

August 2013: John Bowden

Please do your best to help them all settle into VSAG's unique diving culture. ❖



Sandy Webb (right) & fellow Antarctica snorkeler, Maureen Cox - "Never too old to snorkel!"

Member of the Month Awards

March 2013:

Carole & Peter Campisano with David Politakis

In appreciation for assisting John Lawler and crew to launch & recover "Signature One" thus enabling the dive on the ex-HMAS Canberra to go ahead on 24th February, 2013 ❖



March recipients pictured with Committee member, Trevor Williams

May 2013:

While no 'Member of the Month' award was made in May, an honorable mention was made of the above and beyond efforts of **David Flew** in assisting David Geekie and John Lawler with boat and boat trailer issues. David Flew also recently produced a number of shot weights for a number of VSAG boat owners. ❖



David Flew producing shot weights

**June 2013:
Peter Galvin**

For his encouragement of new members through his warm hospitality at his holiday home in Inverloch. ❖



July 2013:

Mary Malloy, Alan Beckhurst and Getunder Dive Club

For gathering the team to search for and find John Lawler's underwater camera, a week after it was lost. ❖



Rainbow Warrior Visit

By Stephen Vadja

My wife Julie and I did a tour of the Rainbow Warrior when it was in Melbourne earlier this year. We went through the boat, the bridge, etc. and learned how the crew do shifts of duty 3 months on and off the vessel. What interested me the most was how professional they were and what objectives they had set out to achieve.

The Rainbow Warrior was due to sail to Sydney then to Queensland to protest against the coal mining near the Galilee Basin which is expanding, and also the ports along side The Great Barrier Reef. The main ports that are affecting the area of the Reef are Port Abbott which affects the turtle nesting, Port Hey which affects the Humpback Whale aggregation area, Port Balaclava affecting the Snubfin Dolphin, and Port Gladstone affecting the Dugongs.

REEF ON THE BRINK

In Spite of pleas from the UN World Heritage Committee to protect the Reef's outstanding universal value, nine huge coal terminals are proposed to be built in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area.

If these terminals are built, millions of cubic meters of sea floor will be dredged and thousands more coal ships will carve their way through the Reef every year..

Mining expansion will also mean more coal is burnt, helping the two most serious threats to the Reef—climate change and ocean acidification.

Quotation from Dr Chris McGrath University of Queensland

“We should publicly recognize that we are planning to destroy the Reef”

Moral of the story go dive The Great Barrier Reef now before it disappears. ❖



Dive Reports

17th February 2013

Lost Reef

Written by Denys Smerchanskyi

Combined Getunder / VSAG dive

After having a quick stroll on the jetty and seeing the pilot boat depart for yet another vessel, I joined **Alan Beckhurst** and **Mary Malloy** for what turned out to be one of the best dives in Victorian waters. **David Geekie** and **Pam Dagley** arrived minutes later and in no time we were ready to launch at an already busy Queenscliff jetty. Even Fisheries decided not to miss such a nice day and launched shortly after us. Good on them. Also on Freediver were **Rob** and **Carol** as well as **Jeff Schmidt**.

After a quick ride through the Heads, we steered to what is known as Lost Reef. The water at the coordinates was turquoise blue. A bit of a swell was rolling but otherwise conditions were perfect. Shortly after, **Signature Two** came over. Then we plunged... The beauty of the water at 20m visibility was quite astonishing in itself. And at the bottom of the shot line we were greeted by large schools of Trevally and Perch.

The water was quite warm at 22C and the depth of about 33m provided quite a good change compared from other, more usual, dive sites. This dive proved to be such a great combination of deeper diving and sea life that it became for me one of the highlights of Victorian diving so far. Swimming further along the reef we

spotted a few flower like sponges, Leatherjackets and marine life. While all this time, schools of bigger fish hovered above us. Then we went up to let the camera crew take the plunge to the deep and hopefully get some good shots. On surfacing, there were **John Lawler's** and **Peter Campisano's** boats with quite a few divers.

During the surface interval we were entertained by a fur seal swimming around. After lunch it was almost unanimously decided to stay on the spot and try out the treasures of the deep again. ❖

24th February 2013

HMAS Canberra & Chimney Pot

Written by Denys Smerchanskyi

Combined Getunder / VSAG dive

The weather turned out just right for the dive at HMAS Canberra on the 24th of February. **Trevor Williams** and I joined **David Geekie** and **Pam Dagley** for what turned out to be a marvellous day. After a quick launch from Queenscliff we were at the yellow buoys in no time. **John Lawler** and **Peter Campisano** joined us on their boats shortly. After tying the boat to the booked buoy, first lot of divers plunged in. Trevor and I quickly found our way through the decks down to the very bottom of the ship. On the way we saw a couple of Leatherjackets and a few other

fish. The visibility was quite fair. Upon reaching the bottom we swam outside for a few metres. The wreck has leaned to one side and it is quite noticeable when looking from the bottom. On our way up we went through the ship's canteen, which I have never seen before. It was quite an interesting dive.

For the second dive of the day the boats scattered. **Signature Two** arrived at the Chimney Rock. It took us barely two minutes to locate the abandoned cray pot surrounded by rock walls. Lots of old wives swam between the reef walls and blue devils were hiding under the overhangs. Fascinated by the fish life we tried to spend as much time there as we could, balancing just on the edge of the no-deco limit.

A marvellous day with two great dive sites. ❖



*Christine Reynolds aboard the HMAS-
Canberra - Photo : Ian Scholey*

**This is the most dangerous animal
in the world. It is responsible for
MILLIONS of deaths every year.
By its side, a great white
shark swims
peacefully.**



March 2013

Cape Jaffa, South Australia

Written by David Politakis

Attendees : John Lawler, Michael Kakafikas, Peter Briggs, Charlie Brincat, David Politakis.



VSAG boys say “size definitely matters”

To the un-initiated (me in this case) a Cape Jaffa diving weekend was a step into the unknown – my first dive trip/weekend away with the guys, cray bashing. Having read various prior reports over the years from past trips, I thought I had a grasp on what he long weekend might entail? How wrong was I? It was a laughter, fun filled, rewarding & challenging experience from start to finish, one I won't forget in a hurry. Not only was it a quality diving weekend, it was a culinary delight thanks to the efforts of each team member on any given night!

Thanks to sound prior co-ordination from JL everything worked like clockwork. Departure day Thursday 7th came and we were off. Five dive fanatics ventured westwards some 600 km over the border. It was explained to me by the veterans from the outset the weekend was to be known laughingly as the “B.S. (Bull Shit) weekend”. A weekend of most probably exaggerated stories & yarns (alcohol influenced no doubt) built up over several years incorporating many VSAG members and friends who have made the trip to this isolated resort – there's the first misrepresentation - resort!

Cape Jaffa is a desolate, hidden & very, very smelly seaside hamlet (due to constant rotting of sea weed on shore), a town with basically no infrastructure whatsoever. Most promising feature a huge recently created marina/canal complex with great boating facilities, but it appears to be a white elephant at this point. Very few have taken up the marina estate. I think we counted 12 homes out of a possible few hundred actually built, none under construction and just about every second vacant block is up for sale – one quoted as saying “will even sell below cost – call now”. That's the real estate agent coming out in me sorry.

Anyway that aside, our humble accommodation was a couple of cabins in the local caravan park, a great relaxing meeting place as it turned out, perfect for our “bullshit weekend”. Park owners Helen & Peter were more than accommodating

and helpful and even joined us for dinner on one of the nights, supplying some quality local wines to the equation and having a great time chatting.



Dive wise I was told on the way over of the harsh weather & dive conditions usually faced, dive days lost to bad weather, the cold water diving prospect of 11 degrees water temp as actually experienced in past years and Charlie even baited me with the "there's lots of sharks in Jaffa" line! Great – not at all what I had envisaged.

Well most of it was lies as it turned out. The weather was perfect and I mean perfect. Beautiful sunny days between 25 – 35 degrees. Wind was negligible for all 4 days, swell manageable and the seas generally flat - the last day like glass - the gods were looking after me/us! Water temp 20 degrees. Vizability was a little ordinary in close, but apparently that's the way it is in Jaffa. All round pretty good.

Anyway here's a summation....

Arrival day after an 8-9 hour drive saw us land in Cape Jaffa late arvo. Greek food was on the menu – Spinach & Ricotta filo pastry dish followed by boiled home handmade pudding with Marsala sauce and a few beverages – everyone was happy, relaxed & pumped for the next day even after a long drive

Friday Dive Day 1

Margaret Broderick Reef vicinity – clear, beautiful diving, great reef area swim throughs. Two dives and a total of 7 crays landed amongst the group. I was happy to just tag along and watch on day 1 - this was the point where I learnt it was all about size! The competitiveness came out. I thought cray diving was just about nabbing as many legal crays as possible. But it was more than that - it was definitely about having the biggest!! Mick started the weekend off with an impressive 3.3 kg cray and then it was on.

Charlie offered an Indian based menu curry that night including rice & pappadums – very tasty with a few liquid chasers.

Saturday Dive Day 2

Swell rose a little – wind light – dirtied the water somewhat but didn't dampen the enthusiasm.

Two dives and a legal maximum boat full of crays, being 8 on board - this time Pete Briggs taking the honours with a slightly larger cray to the tune of 3.4 kg despite

Mick's accusation Peter stuck a lead sinker up its # for the extra 100 grams of weight?? Briggsy also found, in his words, a "Supermarket of crays" a ledge full and he was right but that was quickly overshadowed by a warning of a 12' Great White shark circling a nearby fishing boat which quickly reached us and changed the mood onboard. However, on a mission we continued on, sometimes looking over our shoulders for ominous dark shadows. Charlie may have in fact been telling the truth in the end amongst all the B.S! Food wise Mick cooked a feast – chargrilled marinated octopus & abalone entrees followed by chicken/pork kebabs cooked on a spit.

Absolutely beautiful – with a few beverages. (Ed.—Notice a pattern here?)

Sunday Dive Day 3

Probably the least favourable day weather/dive wise looking back, but still fairly good diving. A little overcast, swell slightly up creating some surge underneath, but again not windy. Water still a little dirty but not pea soup and we had 2-3 metre viz. Seven crays were raised - John on this day coerced a nice hefty 3.6kg cray into his catch bag after 30 minutes of persuasion. Mick not to be outdone jumped in for a 3rd dive to see what he could muster. The previous day's shark sighting also still the topic of conversation, as well as the weighing in of 6' Mako shark caught locally right in front of us at the caravan park gantry the night before. Mick in on his dive, keen to prove his prowess, jumped in without his catch bag! Ten minutes into the dive,

Spit cooked Pork/Chicken Kebab



Marinated chargrilled octopus

Mick's culinary offering - mmmmm.....tasty

unexpectedly we hear him yelling and screaming waving his arms blowing his diver alert in the distance. Personally, I feared shark for him. It was unlike Mick, but as the boat raced over & approached we saw he had a cray flapping in his bare hand yelling for us to bloody hurry up – he didn't have all day to "frigg" around on the surface. Cray in boat, he dropped down with a catch bag only to surface with few more a bit later. I dubbed him the golden glove Greek boy. He could do no wrong when it came to crays. Pete and I struggled on this day - it belonged to JL & Mick. Food wise we settled into a beautiful BBQ beef roast with roast vegies courtesy of Peter and all capped the night off with a few drinks. The 3 days solid diving was also now starting to show its effects. Tiredness, a bit of wet-suit rash, some cray war wounds here and there – we were all early to bed.

Monday Dive Day 4

This was by far the best dive day conditions. NO wind, 30 degrees and just a minor 2-3' swell.

Water clarity had cleared a little, the majority of weekend warrior fisho's & boats gone home; the water like glass shimmering as far as the eye could see. Again 8 crays were landed from various locations, so were 8 good size abalone. A great finish to the 4 day's diving. One funny takeaway on this day - I was checking my Nautilus safety device to make sure it worked before jumping in just in case! I

was literally 3' behind JL in the boat asking for a radio check to anyone on Ch 73. John responded to the call. not realising it's me right behind him. Naturally because I was right there I didn't bother responding, plus I heard my own call. I thought, so did he, how could he not – he's right in front of the loud speaker and right behind me. He turns around in disgust to Pete, Charlie & myself after a couple of attempts saying some moron (can't repeat actual words here) won't acknowledge his reply to a radio check. Cheekily I put the nautilus back up while looking at each other saying "it's moron here wanting that radio check reply". Then the penny dropped! Maybe you had to be there, but it was funny for those on the spot. For a second, I thought I was going forcedly overboard, but all good. Back on land, John's turn to cook. We had a seafood feast – a crayfish cook up. Beautiful spices, vegetables, some rice, 4 -5 crays deep fried. A couple of locals (Batto & mate) joined the festivities and munched away as well. On a side note Batto swears we liberated a few crays from his cray pot so he had no hesitation



in helping himself to our crayfish – a funny & nice country bloke! A top end to the diving trip.

Overall we caught 32 out of a possible legal limit of 34 crays.

Things we learnt...

John Lawler we interestingly found out has “selective impaired” hearing (in-house joke)

Mick was and is cray mad – majorly almost bordering - O.C.D I reckon

Peter enjoys hanging it on both Mick & Charlie big time LOL

Charlie can't back a boat trailer – well he takes the hard course anyway

David – what can I say about myself? I had an absolute ball. I just hope I get a guernsey next year.

I also learnt like the heading said “SIZE IN JAFFA MATTERS” period!



And John won the heaviest CRAY COMP @ 3.6Kg and collected the prize money! Well done.

A top weekend, fantastic weather, a great bunch of guys, what more could you ask for?

Thanks all for a great weekend. Special mention to Joe Tanks in Kingston for out of hour's fills & Briggsy being the courier (almost sounds drug related). Co-captain Charlie was also a gem behind the wheel of the boat, even though he left JL and myself dangling on dive 1 (another story) thank god for the Nautilus, a faulty one at that. My advice to other members, if you get the chance to go on this weekend, despite the travel time to & fro, it's well worth it.

Time to depart. Hopefully see you all around sometime soon. ❖



Wilson's Prom 2013

Written by John Mills

As usual the trip to the prom started with a day in February where you need to log onto a website and get into the draw for sites. As the logon date approached, I

was travelling down to Seaford with Leo for our regular Sunday morning bike ride with a bunch of riders. I casually asked him if he'd got his prom bookings organised with the club and he said "just book mine and Lauren's when you do yours". When the day approached, I logged on, did our bookings, Pat's and Leo's. I thought, "well they're done before 9:05pm so we'll be right". Sure enough in a month or so we had our sites confirmed. I printed off the sheets; Pat got his at the meeting but I didn't catch up with Leo as I missed a few of the Sunday morning rides with things like the Grand Prix and weekends in Torquay getting in the way. I rang him on the Thursday before Good Friday to get his e-mail details and he said, "I'll swing by on Friday morning to pick them up". This was fine as Priya had student teacher interviews that week and was tired so we were never going to make a Thursday night departure. I was kind of glad that someone else was on the same timetable as us.

As usual an advance party took off on the Thursday to get the wagons in a circle. Baz and Pat had gone down early.

Leo swung by as arranged to pick up his slips. The word on the street was that JL had set up, then someone looked out and his site was empty. Why had he left so suddenly? Apparently he thought it would be good idea to do a Bear Grylls type adventure and just live off the bare essentials. In lieu of a parachute, just the outer of the tent would do. As he was

setting up the tent outer in the wind and rain, it was thought that discretion was the better part of valour, so a trip was made back to get the inner part of the tent as this would be more comfortable.

Back at our ranch, packing was proceeding as planned. There was a discussion as to whether we should take dive gear as the wind forecast was terrible and boat space was limited. We decided to take enough tanks in case on the off chance that one of us got a dive. We also had a few other jobs to do such as arranging furniture and putting out hard rubbish. We left in time so that we would hit the Prom and get the trailer set up before dark as it was still daylight savings. We were successful. Leo was not far ahead of us and had just got his and Lauren's sites set up.

I noticed that Andy had his camp well and truly established at this time.

There is an old adage that mechanic's don't fix their own cars. It would seem that the same applies for plumbers and gas fitters as Leo had not filled the gas bottles and the regulator on the caravan was in such a state of disrepair that he had no fridges or stoves. There was some decanting of bottles done to help the situation. Yet there were still problems with missing hoses for barbecues and no mantles for lanterns.

Pat managed to feed everyone with his mega spaghetti Bolognese. We all ate in our living area and retired quite early.

Come morning, Baz passed by and asked if I was up for a ride with him and Craig. I thought yep as I had two bikes with me. We were to set off at 10:15. Leo was still scrounging around the camp for regulators to fix the caravan gas system. He almost succeeded, but the fittings for the regulator he had, just didn't fit. There was nothing more for it. Leo was going to have to forgo the ride and go to the "big smoke" (Foster) to get the parts. Priya and Pat went along to keep him company. I asked Priya to get some Shellite for the lamp. I set off with Baz and Craig as planned for the ride. Leo passed us with a blaze of horns and hands being waved out the windows. The feedback was that I was determinedly pedalling up the hill, Baz was ahead and Craig was comfortably spinning up front. No problem, I am not built for climbing hills on pushbikes so slow and steady wins the day (I had two trips over the Darby Saddle in front of me). We got to Darby River and decided to turn around at the twenty kilometre mark. We reached the turnaround point and took the tailwind home. It was a good ride and I always feel alive after climbing the saddle a couple of times.

Leo had a successful trip to Foster and had got all the bits for the gas system at the Mitre 10 in Foster. Priya had also got the Shellite from the same place. There appeared to have been a red wine buying frenzy also with Leo purchasing some suitably aged wine for his tastes. He was very protective of his stash, when I was

retrieving Priya's inferiorly aged swill. He made sure that we didn't swipe any of his. I wandered off to the other sites and saw Pauly Tipping and Benita. Apparently there had been a scuba Olympics held between VSAG and Getunder. We lost by one point. It was pointed out that our weakness was that Pauly had been chosen as the anchor-man for the tug of war. By his own admission he stated that he had not held such a role for 50 years. He still swears black and blue that we were duded as they let the rope go in the second round so VSAG would fall in the water.

The rest of the afternoon was spent replacing gas regulators and putting mantles in lamps. Leo now had a fully functioning "gas lit palace". I said to Priya "so you got the shellite from the Mitre 10 in Foster". Her response was "did we go to a Mitre 10?" Lauren confirmed that she must have as they all came back with Mitre 10 branded bags. A lot of discussion was held over the state of Leo's barbecue plate as it was quite rusty. I commented that it was retrieved from a dive at the Wilson's Prom Lighthouse. Eventually the cat was let out of the bag that it was actually rusty as it was left to fester in a plastic bag.

Again I retired quite early but Priya, Pat and Leo did the rounds of the other sites with their bottles of red in hand. Apparently Leo's red was so good that he had it tucked under his jacket and was secretly dispensing it to himself so no one could

get any. Priya was so impressed with John Gladding's camp lights that it looks like we will be ordering a set now.

Through the night the predicted winds and rain picked up. The camper trailer survived and we had a warm dry night. Lauren did not fare so well with the tent being tossed around with some tearing. She and Leo were up half the night shoring it up and doing running repairs. Lauren was ready to bail in the morning but eventually decided to stick it out.

I wandered around camp on Sunday and saw Pauly and JL taking off on a walk. Pauly commented that "about 35 years ago they were worried about the average age of the club and needed a membership drive". Benita asked "How old would you have been?" Pauly indicated that they were in their late thirties and early forties. Apparently I was, and still am, considered to be a Whippersnapper (I'm not). As diving was seen as being a lost cause, the Getunder crew and the boat owners pulled up stumps. Melanie arrived with the two girls in the afternoon and got settled. We spent an hour or two in Leo's caravan having a few beers and talking rubbish with whoever decided to drop in. We had a shared meal of crayfish from the March Long weekend and whatever else we could round up. I noticed that Leo's Cray was the one with the black cable tie on it from the Labor Day long weekend so that he could mark it as his. Again we had a few reds and called it a night. Leo was keen to go for a ride to

Darby River in the morning.

We had a peaceful night and nobody's tent was blown down. The weather looked a bit dodgy and Leo decided not to ride. We started to pack trying to get the tent dry between the windows of drizzle. I went over to do the dishes and caught up with Pauly and Pat. Priya came over and said "what's the difference between you guys standing around talking, and a mothers club meeting?" I quickly interjected that it was "secret men's business". Pauly confirmed this by saying "That's correct as we were talking about ladder safety and prostrate problems".

Eventually we found the correct drying window. We managed to get dry canvas packed away. I got some sausages from the shop, chucked them on Leo's barbecue and had lunch with them. We then completed the pack up, did the usual round of goodbyes and were on our way.

Pat, Leo and Andy's crew were staying on a bit longer to take advantage of the improving weather.

We reflected on the way home that even though the weather was bad and that boats were limited it was still a good trip as we caught up with our mates, had a few laughs and shared experiences. ❖

** See pages 50-51 for photos*

Sunday 7TH April 2013

Another Day In Dive Heaven — Coogee and Reefs

Written by John Lawler

Signature One - Benita McDonough, Steve Vajda, David Politakis and myself.

Sea Eagle - Ian Scholey's RIB out for it's first run with VSAG - with David Flew. (The view of these two sitting close by behind the drive console and DF with his DiveOz pink beanie surely allows for the "Cuddly Couple Award" to be bestowed on these two divers!)



The Cuddly couple

Coogee

My reputation for accurate dropping of the shot onto the dive sites was.. well.. "shot".. as we seemed to have put the line on another point that looked like the wreck rise - nope!

As we arrived at the end of the line, no wreck but very pretty reefs. Well as we're there, and after a good look around, we agreed to make this our dive.

Back on the boat, we pulled the shot and re-sounded and found the site. The divers came back with glowing reports and good photos. Benita - "You just have to dive this today..it is beautiful"

Ok, so we kit up and sure, it was just so pretty and calm - viz : 10-15mtrs - and plenty of colour and fish life. The two resident Boarfish are a highlight here - all happy.



Steve Vajda - Photo : Ian Scholey

Reefs... Expect the Unexpected!

The first group of divers now decided to do a reef dive west of Pt. Lonsdale. Conditions were still relatively calm - no need to sound for the reefs as the viz was perfect and we could see the bottom. We put a small buoy on the area for reference.

Still so calm we could follow the bubbles, and by now the divers were some 150 mtrs west of the original entry mark

er buoy. Then within minutes, the (predicted, but early) southerly blew in and waves grew to metres. 45 minutes or so minutes into the dive when we expect the divers to surface, no sight of the three. Swells mounting, winds blowing - then "Signature one.. we are up..turn 90degrees.." David Politakis was calling from his Nautilus Lifeline!

Well ahead, we could just see three heads bobbing up and down in the swells. Perhaps it would have taken some time to find the divers but this is an example of a safety device, that in a situation like this, saved a possible wider, more involved search.



David Politakis, Steve Vadja, JJ, and Benita McDonough with Signature One

The day ended with cold drinks and tank fills and all happy divers. ❖

Wednesday 10th April

Mid Week Divers — Ex HMAS Canberra & Coogee

Written by John Lawler

Conditions: Perfect—no swells, no wind... warm, clear blue skies.

Who: Hyeonji Kim, Phil Watson, David Flew, David Reinhard, John Lawler.

Boat: Signature One

Plan: None.

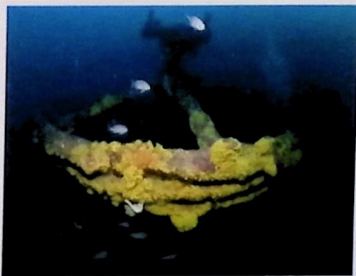
Arrived at Sorrento 9am and loaded up - gathered for a plan discussion - most had not dived the Canberra for some time. Plan One decided - called Parks and Booked the 10-12 slot.



Hyeonji Kim Photo - Phil Watson

Smooth run down to the site - two divers in - extensive coverage both inside and outside and all good. Phil took limp brush to try to clean the VARS plaque - no success.

Next three divers in - JL leading to Laundry entry at 30 mtrs - up one deck and then into Junior Mess - sad to see "Mac's Mural" has faded away. Into the kitchen - so much destruction over time from huge swell but made it interesting. Down into the engine room - out and up to the bridge - how things have changed - Captain's chair looking almost like a skeleton - so much growth. Down into the "Comms Room" and then out again and up to the masts areas - along the top to the area where the port side hanger once was and onto the area above the helipad - dive over up to the boat.



The Coogee - Photo : Phil Watson

General Discussion about next dive - I was amazed yet pleased to learn that two divers had not dived the Coogee. Plan Two decided.

Site was sounded (accurately this time!) with the ocean by now, oily and so calm.

We all had an excellent dive on this most beautifully coloured wreck - the two huge local resident boarfish came out to greet us and the fish life was stunning - viz 10-15.

.....And so that was the end of the diving - great crew of divers - so much fun and good banter.

Post dive : usual form - cold drinks, tank fills, boat wash down and a great easy drive home along the new Peninsula Link.

Post dive day:

The wonders of Facebook! Photos and comments posted led to some interesting comments on the dive day - all good - much envy!

Finally, thanks to Phil for promoting the dive day well in advance for a crew to be available...and to the fine crew of divers who made the day go so well and without fuss, good humour and safety always top of mind for these type dives. ❖

THURSDAY 2ND MAY 2013

Mid Week Divers — Rosebud Reef, The Hurricane & Scallops

Written by John Lawler

Divers : Sandy Webb, Tim Forster, Ian Christiansz & John Lawler

Sandy, Tim, me and my boat were all available for some mid week diving so the plan was to meet at Rye at the sensible hour of 9.30am. The plan was in and out of limbo all week as we had a diver drop out at the last minute, but thanks to an off chance comment to Peter Galvin we had the good luck to be connected to Black Rock member Ian Christiansz who was really keen to join in...things were meant to happen!

The wrecks and reefs out in Bass Straight would have been a preference however the strong winds pushed the swells up so inside bay diving was our plan.

Arriving at Rye the waters were flat and oily-like and stayed that way until a gentle 10 knot northerly came down the bay around 10am so we loaded up and set off to the first of our three planned dive sites for the day..Rosebud Reef.

This beautiful artificial reef always produces some amazing scenery and it mostly depends on the visibility and water temperature. At the height of the summer temperature the reef generally teems with fish, yet when the temp drops to around 16 dgs, as it was on this day, there is still an amazing variety of fish life...my friendly cuttlefish from my past dive here was not around today however.

Into the drysuit (me) and with Intova in hand, and Ian into his wetsuit, we dived against the very slow ebbing tide all the way along the reef and checked some broken bits to the east end. With the current taking us back, the variety of reef life was captured on video...so much to see..wonderful!

Sandy (in drysuit) and Tim in his thick wetsuit spent a long 45/50 minutes here and for first time visitors to the reef were impressed with their experience.

Next stop was just 1.5kms away, west to the Hurricane wreck. In the past I have had some difficulty in finding the right place to drop the shot and on the last dive missed the wreck completely! Not so today (Lloyd/Peter Campisano note!) My mark came up very strong on the sander and the divers fell right on the remains.

This is the story of the Hurricane:

The Hurricane was a 1200 ton iron ship, built in 1853. On the 20th April 1869, while entering Port Phillip Heads, 3 months out from Liverpool, she struck a submerged rock off Point Lonsdale (probably Lonsdale Rock). Her Master, Captain Johnston, inspected the hole, and finding no water continued to Melbourne.

A short time later, the Hurricane was found to be taking water rather badly. She eventually sank off Rosebud in about 12m. Only half the 2000 tons of cargo was ever salvaged. Being in the South

Channel, the wreck represented a hazard to shipping and was blasted.

The Wreck Today:

The wreckage is spread over an extensive area. Despite this, there are still recognisable pieces of the ship. The wreck site is covered with steel plates, girders, and wooden beams. A small section of the stern stands about 2.5m off the seabed, and is the most intact part of the ship. Near the bow, a large capstan is visible, amidst a complicated mass of twisted metal.

The observant diver will notice star pickets protruding from the bottom. These were placed by the Victorian Archaeological Survey when it mapped the site. As with most wreck sites, the Hurricane forms an artificial reef, which is now home to many fish, as well as other forms of marine life. This makes for an enjoyable dive for those that visit. The keen diver can usually find a good number of scallops close to the wreck. A concrete cairn outlining the history of the Hurricane has been placed near the stern.

Hazards and Precautions:

We suggest you avoid diving on the Hurricane during the snapper fishing season, when up to a dozen boats are anchored on the wreck at one time. At all other times, be alert for boats and fishing lines. Despite being several kilometres from the Heads, the Hurricane is only dived at slack water. This is about 2.5 hours after the scheduled slack water at Port Phillip

Heads. The Hurricane is a declared Historic Shipwreck. Any interference with it, including removal of materials, is prohibited.

The final dive for today was to appease the appetite for a tasty dinner so scallops was the target. Thirty minutes of diving and the lift bag popped up almost half full while Ian's bag was bulging. But some disappointment followed when an inspection of the catch revealed that about 55%-60% of the shells were empty, while the shells were mostly intact & still whole, the meat was gone. It could be any number of reasons but most likely the Northern Pacific Seas stars may have moved through the site in their millions and taken the shellfish meat out. Today, good company...a new diver friend in Ian who now might become a VSAG'er...lots of great safe diving and good fun.

Finally:

The Department of Primary Industries has issued a "Proposal to establish a commercial dive fishery for scallops in Port Phillip Bay" April 2013. Part of the proposal is the protection of a recreational dive zone which extends from Dromana to Point Nepean and St Leonards to Portarlington. If this proposal comes to meet all the requirements, then the harvesting could begin later this year. A copy of the proposal can be obtained from the Customer Service Centre on 136186. ❖

Sunday 5th May 2013

Boarfish Reef & Popes Eye

Written by John Lawler

WHO: Ian Scholey, Michael Ngai, Andrew Qusted, John Lawler

BOAT: "Signature One"

DC: Graham Ellis/John Lawler.

We met at Sorrento at 8.15/8.30 & were on the water at 9am. We had planned for the Eliza Ramsden but heavy shipping determined that it was not possible. So we moved the dive to Boarfish Reef for slack water flood at 9.55am. Dive Victoria had two full boats also at the site. We shared our shot with one of their group. Conditions were reasonably good visibility-wise and the slack settled for a good 45 minutes. All divers used the full 45 minutes, max 20 metres but mostly around the 15 metres depth. A novice attempt to bring home a cray for dinner had one diver in (internal) tears....next time Michael!

We had some difficulty pulling the shot as the tide had turned and the shot weight was stuck fast. Some pulls in different directions finally got the shot loose and up....with regret, during this mammoth effort Ian's dive computer got tangled in the line, pulled off his wrist and was lost overboard..(\$800!)

Lunch in the peaceful "Popes Eye" then a second dive on the south side -pleasant conditions, good fish life and some friendly cuttlefish.

Conditions were overcast all day but the surface conditions were easy with just a 10-15 knot south easterly that slowly abated as the day wore on. However the swells were up to 3 mtrs at the Heads... no diving outside even for the big charter boats! A very fine dive day ... a very fine dive crew! ❖



Andrew Qusted & Michael Ngai on "Signature One"

Saturday 11th May 2013

The Pinnacles & George Kermodie Wreck *Written by Dickon Roddie*

Who : Dive Captain, John Lawler, Ian Scholey, Trevor Williams, Dickon Roddie.

Conditions were not looking promising for diving on the weekend of 11 & 12 May. With 25 – 30 knot NNW predicted

most of the weekend, diving in the bay was not going to happen. To quote our illustrious dive captain, "Frankly if this report stays true, it may not be comfortable nor safe for diving." So he proposed a dive plan on the south side of Philip Island, hopeful that this would be in the lee of the wind.

Only 4 divers including John put their hands up to give it a go. A rendezvous of 9.30 at Newhaven to cater for Trevor's lie-in was agreed upon.

Saturday on Philip Island did not disappoint, not a cloud in the sky and more importantly no wind & or swell and this was the exposed side of the island!

JL arrived and a dive plan of the Pinnacles followed by the George Kermode was hastily agreed upon lest the weather turn. I was a little concerned to see my fellow divers pulling on dry suits, nevertheless I pulled on my 3-2 wetsuit confident that I wouldn't regret leaving my own drysuit on the kitchen table.

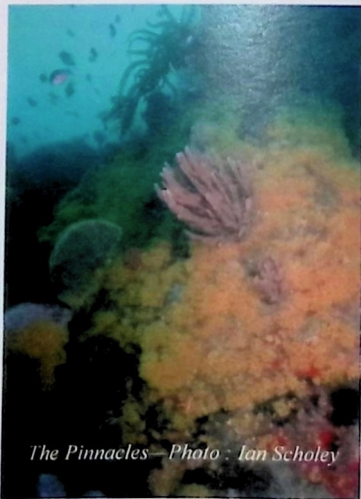
Neither Trevor, Ian nor I had dived with each other previously so the short trip out from Newhaven was spent getting to know one another and marvelling the glorious autumn morning.

Trevor & I were buddied up and elected to dive to first. I have dived the Pinnacles previously in 25m viz. My dive buddy at the time, Benita will probably still remember the sight of me, wrongly weighted, heading towards the surface feet first until I was able to perform an unglamorous forward roll & vent my suit.

In the 10m viz on Saturday, I didn't recognise the site and if the shot line hadn't landed spot on the mark we would never have found the Pinnacles.

What a beautiful dive site, even in reduced visibility - there are huge patches of bright yellow bryozoans, tentacles sifting the current for phytoplankton. At

about 20m there is a cavern inhabited by a school of Old Wives. We both poked hopefully into a few holes but no crabs were to be found. My favourite find of the dive was a delicate yellow sea spider. The bottom was reached at 34m from where we made our way up to avoid a deco stop. At 35 mins dive time whilst hanging at 6m doing my safety stop, I had plenty of opportunity to think about my decision to leave my drysuit at home!



The Pinnacles—Photo : Ian Scholey

Lunch was dispatched with sat enjoying the sun, calm conditions, good company and a large seal that came for nose around.

Neither Ian nor I had dived on the George Kermodé and John and Trevor had not been for a number of years so we were all eager to check it out. In the same pairs as before, Trevor and I followed the

shot line downwards, the hull of the wreck came into view, and even though the shot had landed directly on amid ship and the visibility had increased to about 15m, the vessel extended beyond our view in each direction.

The George Kermodé was a bucket dredger built in 1914 in Ceylon and was acquired by the Melbourne Harbour Trust in 1941. She was scuttled in 1976, coming to rest upside down and with her buckets strewn across the sand.

The hull has collapsed inwards in a number of places making penetration straight forward. From the outside this wreck is at its most interesting. However once inside, the penetrations through the hull allow shafts of light that illuminate sections whilst making others seem pitch black by comparison - the views are both spectacular and eerie at the same time.

Inside the ship it is possible to see the remains of the mechanics of the Kermodé's dredging past - huge cog wheels, 8 or 10ft in diameter, some hanging pre-

cariously while others have already fallen on their sides - were some of the more interesting and recognisable parts. It is possible to swim right under the boilers and take one of a number of exits although there are lots of protrusions and sharp edges reaching out to snag dive gear. Trevor and I made a couple of circuits of the ship passing inside and outside. The wreck is home to an abundance of fish and they seem less skittish than the inhabitants of the subs. At 30 minutes, my choice of suit had again meant I got cold before our computers or air dictated we had to leave so it was with regret that we had to ascend.

John and Ian were likewise impressed with the wreck, both taking advantage of the unusual lighting to capture photos and videos of their dive. Ian has kindly shared some of these for the dive report.



George Kermodé - Photo: Ian Scholey

This wreck is well worth travelling over to Philip Island to see and I hope you all get a chance to experience it in the conditions we did. ❖

SUNDAY 19TH MAY 2013

Mornington & Blairgowrie Piers

Written by John Lawler

Divers : Ian Scholey, Michael Ngai, John Lawler

The BOM forecast—swells, winds...(ho hum) - made any boat diving out the window for this Sunday. Mornington pier was the target. Michael decided on a 9AM start, Ian and I, 10.30.

Arriving in light rain, we saw the testy swells pushing through the pier and Michael and his buddies surfacing around 50 metres on the east side. Watching this made the decision to abandon this place easy!

"Let's try Blairgowrie huh?" Off we went and arrived in sunny conditions, all rain passed on. There were a few groups of divers who had already done the dive with the news that the visibility was good..."This is for us".

Into thermals and drysuits and the long slog from the club car park to the water, then a noticeable 14 degrees water temperature! Not long into the dive we spotted a huge black ray just off the pier, apparently feeding on fish frames from some fishos. I got it on video just as it decided enough was enough and off it went in a slow swim east.

A banjo shark was next and then a small ray also now on video....and Ian busy as usual with his magic UW camera — a relaxed sea horse on a pylon, pipe fish and other small marine creatures were now on Ian's photo files.

The dive took us along the north south pier and about half way along the East-West pier and then we returned on the run back to shore. Fish life was scarce... probably winter!



John Lawler & friend at Blairgowrie Pier—Photo : Ian Scholey

Just as we were exiting the water on the trolley line, Ian noticed some tentacles hanging out of a metal pipe. Looking into the pipe we saw a large octopus all wrapped up. I was keen to bring this out but it was just "glued" to the sides of the tube and was impossible to budge—a fine bit of excitement to end our day.

We had slack water all through the dive and it just started to run as we exited the water. This made the dive so easy and relaxed, and yes, the visibility was good. The dive had a run time of around an

hour. The walk to and from the car seemed like a lot longer but then again I'm a shore dive whinger!

Such a fine day! ❖

SUNDAY 26TH MAY 2013

Rosebud Reef

Written by Michael Ngai

Divers : John Lawler, Ian Scholey, Michael Ngai

Bottom Temp : 14C

Max Depth : 7.8m

Run Time : 36min

Forecast was for a 15 – 20 knot westerly, and it appeared that weekend diving was going to be cancelled due to a lack of interest in adverse conditions.

A phone call from John late Friday afternoon told me that Ian was planning to take his RIB out on Sunday and hopefully we could do something close where it's relatively protected from the winds - like Rosebud Reef, Hurricane or South Channel Fort. I was originally planning to jump in from a pier to do some equipment testing - I recently acquired a more compact side mount setup for the tropics and I'm still not entirely comfortable with it.

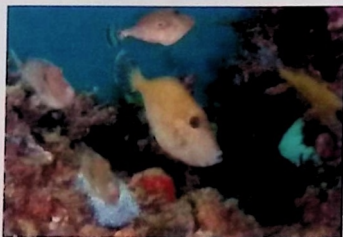
Well, a boat dive with like-minded fellow VSAG'ers is better than jumping in solo on a pier any day! I immediately confirmed with John that I'm up for diving and it's going to be my first RIB experience! Super excited!! Come late Saturday, a text message from John – “ Sounds like diving might have to be cancelled and we might end up doing Flinders pier. Winds are not co-operating! Ian is going to head down to Rye pier earlier on Sunday to scope out conditions, if it's not favourable, he'll call us and cancel the dive.” Fingers crossed!!!

Sunday morning, got up, got ready and off I went. Phone in cradle, hopefully no one rings!! Got to Rye pier without anyone calling me which is a good sign! Saw Ian and his RIB. Fantastic! Man, Rye boat ramp is like a maze if you follow the correct arrows!! Oh well not too worry I've got plenty of fuel.

Quick confirmation with everyone- we're setting off to Rosebud Reef. A RIB definitely feels a lot less bumpy on the seas, until I was told to sit at the nose which is an awfully awkward and uncomfortable position. You either lie down flat which means you bang you head each time the RIB hits a “bump”. Or you try to sit, but it's sloping down so it's no good either, or you can kneel which is pretty hard on your knees and you have to hold on for dear life! I think this is definitely the hardest part of the day for me!!

Got to the dive site, shot was dropped and off we go. John and I are in first.

It was a magnificent dive. Easily 15m viz and plenty of colour and life. Unfortunately, I was playing with equipment pretty much the entire dive and didn't pay attention to any of the scenery. But I'm happy regardless - I figured out what I need to adjust and I got to ride a RIB.



Rosebud Reef—Photos : Ian Scholey



We surfaced after 30 odd minutes, it was a bit of a struggle getting back on the RIB, you basically hand off all your gear, then you kick yourself up like a seal! Ok so I got a cramp while trying to kick too hard!! (Shhh... I think Ian was pretty

much hauling me back up as I had to stop kicking halfway! Thanks Ian.)

Ian's turn and off he went. Conditions turned for the worse while Ian was down, winds were approximately 15 knots and kicked up to 20 knots or so. White caps were appearing everywhere and we wondered where Ian was. Quick glance at the watch and he appears to be down for more than an hour by now. Wait! We seemed to be drifting further and further away from the buoy.

Hm... that's weird. Oh well... Then the next minute John noticed on the GPS that we are 400m+ away from Rosebud Reef. That can't be right, the buoy is right there, max 100m away!!! Gah, it must have dragged (so we thought).

Off we went back to Rosebud Reef following the GPS. The rain starting pelting down on us at this moment. John put on his driving goggles and we both tried our hardest to keep a lookout for Ian's SMB. It seemed like forever but we finally spotted something on the surface! It was a yellow SMB and Ian was there and he was still alive!!! Tears came to our eyes (ok maybe that's a slight exaggeration.) The rope had come undone and the buoy drifted away on its own!! We assisted Ian back onto the boat and off we went chasing the buoy! We went as far as 500m+ from Rosebud Reef but the

buoy was not to be found! We were all a bit disappointed, hm... I suppose it's more important to have found our dive buddy than the buoy.

We were debating if we should do a second dive, Elsa's Reef or South Channel. We were all feeling cold (except Ian who *CLAIMED* he wasn't cold) and tired from the "search and rescue" and losing "Wilson" to the wild seas. We decided to call it a day and head back!

Maybe not everything went according to plan but I think we all managed to get our "objectives" accomplished on that day! Ian got the RIB out, had a good dive and took plenty of photos. John was eager to get wet, and I found out what I needed to do to refine my setup. All in all a good day and plenty of experience for me on the water! Thanks VSAG for another good day out. ❖

SUNDAY 16TH JUNE 2013



A burley pot found snagged on the reef—Photo : John Lawler

SUNDAY 16TH JUNE 2013

J4 Sub & Boarfish Reef

Written by John Lawler

Divers : Michelle Doolan, David Flew, Ian Scholey and me in Signature One.

So the saying "you'll never never know if you never never go" seemed to fit this day's diving attitude—a 20 knot predicted south easterly and two metre swells sent out a challenge to 4 hardy VSAG divers who viewed the day with a "half glass full" mind set. We agreed while loading up to test the rip and aim for the 27mtr J4 submarine...there was no sign of any predicted wind force and the day was, for the most parts, sunny. The bay on the north side was almost mill pond flat.

The swelly rip was quite safe and the exit was done easily...off to the sub. The swell forecast was right however and at the sub site the swells were at the two metre level, but more uncomfortable than unsafe. The first shot drop on the sub left me not sure we hit the target so it was "pull up please". Pulling up an 11 kg shot line is not quite fun but done with no grumbles. Another sounding and this time a very positive read and confirmed by all eyes..."drop".

Michelle and I got the nod for the first dive and the shot was perfect—on the sub deck and right next to the conning tower - well done David! We were greeted by a massive school of fish –wow! But it was too swelly for a trip through the sub so after a good look at and through the foreword torpedo tubes, we swam up and along the top to the rear hatch opening where we chanced a drop down. Not too swelly and good enough for some video. Then to the stern and down to the stabilisers on the sea bed and back to the conning tower after numerous peeps into the holes and cracks. An easy dive, no problem with the swells and the viz was an amazing 10-15 mtrs! Water temperature was 15dgs.

Our buddies, David and Ian enjoyed the same conditions and likewise chose to dive externally around the sub and came back all smiles. About this time, the SE started to pick up so, with our diving plan in Bass Straight over, it was back through the rip and in to the peace and calm of Nepean Bay for lunch....and still sunny and warm.

Next dive was agreed—the brilliant Boarfish Reef on slack ebb at 1.30. Dive Vic shot the kelp bed reefs nearby so we had company, the vis was down to around 5mtrs and the water temperature down to around 13dgs. Even in our Otter drysuits it was cold! Michelle had never seen a crayfish in the bay so I found her first sighting and then moved on, leaving

the crustacean wondering what all the strange lights were about. 30 minutes later, the tide changed to flood. Having clipped my Intova camera to my BC, I prepared and sent up the SMB, then moving my hand down to unclip my camera, found it was not there! Too late to return to the bottom...stunned, disappointed and trying to work out how this had occurred had me totally engrossed during the 2km drift dive David and Ian were enjoying.

So far the weather was on our side but after all gear was packed and we headed off to Sorrento, we had a down-pour for about 10 minutes...s'pose the forecast for "showers" from the good people at the BOM was one of two they got right for our day of "half glass full" diving!

When all the divers are experienced, positive, and organised, it all adds to a fine, safe dive day. So it was on this day—thanks Michelle, Ian and David for this. ❖

** See Member of the Month page for an update on JL's missing camera.*



Boarfish Reef—Photo : Ian Scholey

SUNDAY 30TH JUNE

Reefs & Whales

Written by Ian Scholey

Divers : L to R Dickon Roddie, Trevor Williams, John Lawler, Denise Rogers, Ian Scholey.



After several days of northerly winds and recent whale sightings, the crew met *Signature One* at Sorrento full of optimism for a great days diving.

However, one look at the low grey clouds and lack of visibility across the water, had the conversation turning to how to transit *The Rip* safely in fog. As always, JL was well organised and had a series of marks sorted out for that very situation so off we went.

No fog and *The Rip* was reasonably comfortable, but once outside, the stronger than expected winds resulted in choppy conditions.

On the other hand, the first chinks of blue were starting to appear through the clouds so things were looking up. A quick discussion re where to dive and we headed off to **Sub Reef**. I was in the first group of divers, so along with buddies Denise and Dickon, we kitted up and rolled back into the blue. Dickon's dip was short lived due to a leaking dry suit so it was Denise and I who descended the line.

The reef was at 25 m with visibility between 10m and 15m and all at a very reasonable 13 degrees. It consists of a series of low rock formations with small overhangs. As we slowly swam around with cameras poised we were joined by a school of Barber Perch, but aside from the occasional Leatherjacket, there was little other fish life around.

As no deco time fast disappeared, we released an SMB and headed back to the surface. Not the most spectacular dive but nice none the less. Back on board, it was clear that the wind had picked up while we were under, with the chop becoming uncomfortable for those on the boat.

After our dive report and with conditions in mind, we headed closer to shore for the second group's dive. We picked a spot close to *Excellent Reef* and put the shot into 14 m on some likely looking reef.

The second group were joined by a rather damp Dickon who, despite a soaked under suit, was still keen to dive. Unfortunately Denise was feeling a little sea sick so I'm sure she was relieved when the 3 divers returned to the surface. After a bit of a struggle with a snagged shot we headed back towards The Rip and the calmer conditions in the bay.

As usual JL slowed the boat outside The Rip for us to don life jackets. Just as we were doing this a whale fluke raised into the air some 30 m in front of the boat!



Photos by Dickon Roddie



With all eyes scanning the water it was with some excitement that we saw 3 Humpbacks hit the surface again some

minutes later. It's amazing the effect that whales have on people. In Denise's case it seemed to completely cure the seasickness and any comments about being cold by those in the group in semi-drys also disappeared. We happily followed the group for about 15 minutes as they swam leisurely across the rip.

Back in the bay and now enjoying one of those perfect crisp sunny Melbourne days, we rushed to get to the dive site for slack water. With the cold getting the better of the group, it was just myself and an extremely game and still soggy Dickon who made the second dive.

After a quick consultation with another dive boat and a kind offer of the use of their shot line, we descended again onto **Boarfish Reef**. After the events of the last few weeks, with lost and then found camera rigs on this spot, I for one think this reef needs to be renamed. I'm torn between Lucky Reef and Miracle Reef.

Whatever the name, this is always a spectacular site and today was no different. The variety of growth and sheer range of colour always delights me. I gave the camera a good work out as we slowly explored every nook and cranny. There was a good range of fish life with the usual Leatherjackets, Bluedevil fish, scalyfins and a huge crayfish that was sadly well out of arms length. With the slack already over and the current picking up, we ended the dive after 35 minutes and headed back to the boat.

Back at Sorrento, with enough time to wash up kit and still enjoy some of the afternoon, we reflected on another good days diving, good company and a special encounter with the Humpbacks.

Next week's dive can't come soon enough. ❖

Birth of Dive Clubs

"Down Under Magic" by Bill Silvester was published in 2012 and details the birth of the Black Rock Skindivers Club and then the Black Rock Underwater Dive Group.



Bill states that the club held its inaugural meeting in his family's home on Beach Road in February 1955. The name was agreed to be "Black Rock Skin Divers".

This name continued until scuba became part of the club.

Due to the increasing interest in scuba it was decided to have two divisions—one for spearfishing and one for scuba. This brought about a name change to "Black Rock Underwater Diving Group" in 1959.

The book states: "it was noted that there were only two other scuba clubs at the time—Victorian Sub Aqua Club (note Club, not Group) and Underwater Explorers Club".

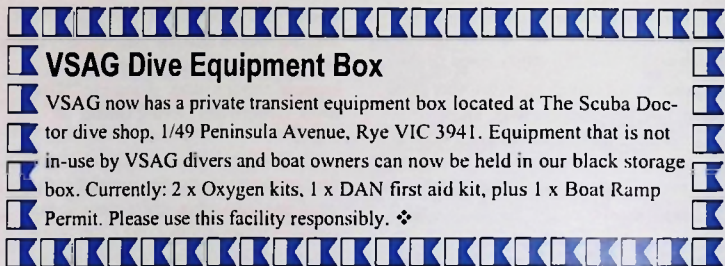
I can therefore agree that VSAC was formed in 1954 (only as a scuba diving club) ...Black Rock as a spearfishing club in 1955, one year later ...and as a scuba diving club in 1959, 5 years later.

Bill Silvester's diving history is amazing and in many instances scary as he willingly admits in his book. By his own admission, he alludes to the fact he probably should not be here today—his "nine lives" were probably used up a few times over. Bill has also written three other books related to diving.

VSAG and Black Rock are two great private clubs (as is Getunder Dive Club) with very fine divers with different needs and ideals and a credit to the world of scuba diving.

It has generally been agreed that our two great clubs were born close together but possibly not always agreed which was the first.....this clears the matter up, not for any other reason other than a fact. ❖

Written by John Lawler



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. ❖

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.



Birthday boys with birthday cake at the Scuba Doctor. Cake with compliments of Hannah Smeeton.

L to R : ???, John Lawler, John Corby, Steve Cartledge.



George Kermode—Photo: Ian Scholey

Dry Suits

By John Lawler

With winter still knocking on our door, it may be some divers are thinking of transferring to dry suits and putting the wetties away. I have to say that after diving in a dry suit for two winters now it's the way to go for warmer diving.

A dry suit is a different world to wetsuits and mostly it comes down to "air management" in the drysuit. It takes quite a few try-dives to get the hang of the unit.

So... read on for the best advice on choosing a dry suit... winter diving made easy... and warm!

This excellent article comes from **John Brunam** and courtesy of **Ocean Divers**.

What to look for in a drysuit

Cold-water divers looking for comfort, fit and insulation in a drysuit have more choices than ever. The purpose of an exposure suit is to maintain a thermal balance between your body and the ocean. Because it's a lot easier to heat air than water, diving in a drysuit is a much more energy-efficient way to stay warm and comfortable while cruising the depths. Selecting the drysuit that best meets your needs is all about making choices. So where should you begin? Right here.

Neoprene or Fabric?

Neoprene drysuits are made of traditional

neoprene foam rubber with watertight seams, seals and zippers. The ability to stretch means a neoprene suit can fit snugly and comfortably while still offering good range of motion. While neoprene is saddled with inherent buoyancy that has to be counter-balanced with ballast weight, it also provides its own thermal properties, so the undergarment doesn't have to be as thick or heavy as those you would wear with a fabric suit.

Fabric drysuits, made mostly of bilaminate or trilaminate materials, are lightweight, have no inherent buoyancy and don't compress at depth, plus they dry quickly and fold compactly for transport. They don't tend to stretch much though, so they need to fit loosely (built-in features like telescoping torsos and expandable gussets help ameliorate this). Fabric suits are often referred to as "shell" suits because they don't contribute to keeping you warm — their only job is to keep water out. Fabric-suit divers rely solely on undergarments for their thermal protection.

Once you've made the decision to go neoprene or fabric, you're faced with additional choices.

Neoprene: Traditional or Compressed?

Traditional neoprene drysuits are made of 7mm or 8mm wetsuit foam rubber, which is comfortable and, because of its insulation, requires less in the way of undergarments. However, this neoprene is extremely buoyant, and it compresses

at depth, which reduces its effectiveness at providing warmth.

Like its name implies, compressed neoprene is wetsuit rubber that's been pre-compressed to 3mm or 4mm, making the rubber more dense and less buoyant but still able to provide some thermal protection. These suits are high-stretch, so they can fit snugly without sacrificing range of motion, thereby minimizing hydro-drag, and they don't require much in the way of undergarments. (There's also something called crushed neoprene, which is even thinner and denser and extremely durable.) These modern suits offer the flexibility of a wetsuit with the warmth of a drysuit. They are the exposure suits of choice among today's neoprene drysuit divers.

Fabric: Light-Duty or Heavy-Duty?

With today's shell suits you can choose from a range of durability levels, depending on how much and what kind of diving you do.

Hardcore divers who are constantly in the water hunting down among the rocks, exploring caves or working on scientific projects should probably look at suits constructed of heavy-duty materials with extra layers of abrasion protection in the high-wear areas. More casual divers who are not in the water quite as much and who tend to do mostly sightseeing might not need to be encased in such rugged armor. Light-duty suits weigh less and are quite comfortable. They aren't designed to stand up to lots of abuse, but

they don't cost as much as the heavy-duty suits either.

Rear Zip or Front Zip?

The standard rear-entry drysuit has a zipper that runs horizontally along the shoulders. These are normally less expensive than front-zip designs. They also are easy to don and doff, but they require the help of a buddy to zip up.

Front-entry designs, with a zipper that runs either diagonally across the chest and hips or horizontally across the chest or the waist, are also referred to as "self-donning" suits. While this is technically true, in reality, not all divers can put on a self-donning suit without assistance. If you don't have the range of motion in your arms and shoulders, fully zipping the suit or climbing out after a dive without assistance might not be doable. So if the self-donning feature is the reason you're buying a suit, before laying down a pile of cash, make sure you can actually self-don it. (Note: a couple of drysuit makers have come up with rear zippers that can be self-zipped with a little practice, but, again, try before you buy.)

Soft Socks or Attached Boots?

Soft socks allow you to choose from a variety of drysuit overboots touting different lace-up designs and tread patterns to suit different diving styles. Soft socks also enable you to turn the suit completely inside-out for cleaning/drying/airing after a day of diving. Attached boots, on the other hand, are really convenient because they simplify the donning pro-

cess and eliminate having to deal with extra gear. However, they range from flimsy latex to rugged vulcanized rubber offering lots of foot support and aggressive tread. Each has its own place, but the boot you choose must be able to handle the type of diving you do. Otherwise, you've created a weak link in your drysuit system where there doesn't need to be one.

Neoprene, Latex or Silicone Seals?

As a general rule, you'll find neoprene seals on neoprene drysuits and latex or silicone seals on shell suits. That said, it is possible to put neoprene seals on shell suits and latex seals on neoprene suits, so it all comes down to preference.

Some neoprene seals are smooth-skin-in, where the skin-in areas on the wrists and neck lay directly against your skin. Other seals are smooth-skin-out. With these you fold the neoprene under so the seal's smooth skin is against your skin. This design is easier to get in and out of because you're pushing your wrists and head through nylon rather than smooth-skin, and they create a very comfortable seal. Neoprene seals last a long time and they provide a modicum of thermal protection.

Latex seals come in either cone-shaped or bell-shaped styles. Cone-shaped seals allow for trimming to fine-tune fit, bell-shaped seals provide more surface sealing area. There's an ongoing debate among drysuit makers over which pro-

vides a better seal, although both styles have proven track records for keeping water out. The thickness of latex varies: thinner latex is much easier to work with, but is more susceptible to tearing. Thicker latex is tougher, but is harder to work with and can be less comfortable.

Some drysuit divers are allergic to latex. That's where silicone comes in. Similar in appearance to the latex variety, silicone drysuit seals offer more resistance to both ozone and UV rays, they are extremely pliable, and they are very easy to put on and take off. Some drysuit manufacturers offer their latex and silicone seals in replaceable systems that enable you to change torn seals on the spot without having to interrupt your dive day.

Valve Positioning

The vast majority of modern drysuits, both neoprene and shell, use a dual valve system: one inflate valve positioned on the chest for pumping air into the suit, and one exhaust valve, usually located on the upper left arm, for venting air out of the suit. While this just-below-the-shoulder exhaust valve position tends to be the highest spot on your body while in a heads-up diving attitude, it sometimes can be difficult to reach when fully geared up, and it can also be hard to see. For these reasons some drysuit makers will place the primary exhaust valve, or add a secondary exhaust valve, on the lower left arm, about midway between elbow and wrist. This can be a huge benefit when controlling a suit's airflow be-