

Fathoms

Official Magazine of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group (est. 1954)

JANUARY 2022



Diving the Wreck of the SS Empire Gladstone

How an EPIRB Saved the Day at the Prom

Jan Watson - In Memoriam

Fin Lightly in Our World



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Top Shots - Marc Alexander



Rapid Bay Jetty, South Australia

Top Shots - Marc Alexander



Flinders Pier, Victoria



Rye Pier, Victoria

Top Shots - Marc Alexander



Broughton Island, New South Wales



Blairgowrie Pier, Victoria

MY FAVOURITE DIVE SITE

Exmouth - Western Australia

by *Carole Campisano*

Exmouth, past Shark Bay in Western Australia (W.A.) is the gateway to Cape Range National Park, or Warnangura as it is known by traditional owners, and is part of Ningaloo Marine Park. We have been there three times and have every intention to return there again soon.

This Park has many snorkelling and diving spots which are world class. There is Turquoise Bay, where you can enter the water at one end of the beach and do an amazing current drift which takes you to the other end of the bay. There are lots of colourful reef fish to see as well as larger creatures like reef sharks, turtles, stingrays, sea snakes and the occasional dugong.



And then there is Pilgramunna; a small camping area on the beach. This may be the best kept secret in W.A. After a long 800 metre swim, past large coral knolls, you are surrounded by a ring of coral reef that separates you from the Indian Ocean. Approaching the reef, the water gets even clearer and shallower than before. The coral reef grows almost to the surface and the marine life is amazing. Huge shoals of fish darting around stag horn coral, reef sharks and leopard sharks abound. A nest of large painted crays are often clicking loudly as we swim past trying to catch our attention.



This is like swimming in a crystal clear aquarium. Unbelievable.

And then there is the world-renowned Navy Pier dive which is still owned by the U.S Military. Special permission is required to dive this spot and I.D. needs to be sighted. A limited number of divers are allowed to dive here at any given time; only by appointment and only under supervision of the local diving operator. The Navy Pier is absolutely loaded with marine life, from grey nurse sharks to shoals of bait fish swimming past. A huge 'Big Friendly Grouper' was the highlight particularly when, to our amazement, one of the dive guides shared a kiss and a cuddle with the fish and the Grouper seemed to kiss him back!

We have also snorkelled with whale sharks a few times here, in the gorgeous blue Indian Ocean. This is an adrenaline rush you are never likely to forget. A spotter plane is used to locate the whale sharks. The boat then manoeuvres to position itself in the path of the creature and snorkel divers are dropped off in front of it. As you come face to face with the emerging whale shark, you are first shocked, and then intimidated by its' sheer size and beauty. You get the opportunity to swim (actually, fin like crazy) alongside the shark till it decides to dive into deeper water and finally out of sight.



We had an interesting incident at Osprey Bay one late afternoon, a bit further north in Cape Range National Park. Peter and I decided to have a quick snorkel there to check out the fish life in the area. Peter was quick to snorkel out while I was still donning my fins. Suddenly, Peter called out, 'Shark! Shark!' and told me not to enter the water. Then, 20 seconds later, Peter almost walked on water and onto the beach! The girls were watching from the sand dunes, rolling around in fits of laughter! A huge, black Hammer Head shark was eye-balling him as it circled around him. We have relived this hilarious scene many times over. Love it.

In summary, Exmouth is pure adventure. Every diver needs to experience it at least once in their life.



The Prom By Helicopter

or How an EPIRB Saved the Day

By Peter Mosse

Stuarts Cousins' article in the October edition of Fathoms prompted these vivid memories and reinforced the importance of an EPIRB in stopping a bad day outcome becoming much, much worse.

In 1995 EPIRBs were essentially unknown, at least amongst the diving fraternity.

I had recently read an article in the FAUI (Federation of Australian Underwater Instructors) news magazine, by a fellow diving instructor and member of the Queensland Coast Guard, about a new piece of equipment known as an EPIRB.

I pondered buying one, and in the end decided to do so. I had an option to take delivery the following week or on the Friday. I opted for the Friday. I hesitated about installing it in the boat immediately. We were planning to dive the Prom that weekend (Australia Day weekend January 1995) and it was just one more thing to organise. But in the end thought, bugger it, I should fit it, and I did.

We launched across the sand at Tidal River and headed out to the Glennies. There was a strong NE wind blowing. We dived our first location behind

Greater Glennie and planned to shift to Dannevig Island for our second dive.

When I started the boat, I noticed a slight reluctance to start, but it fired up. We completed our second spectacular dive, stowed our gear and turned the key. You can probably guess part of what happened next! A very reluctant turn over. It wouldn't start. The slightly reluctant motor became completely uncooperative. We cleaned and refitted the battery terminals and checked all connections and fuses. We even tried starting the motor with a pull cord.

Have you ever tried rope starting a 135 HP engine? Forget it. But the tilt and trim were working well and the radio was working well, so we didn't initially suspect the battery. We thought it must have been the starter motor, mainly because we had been using the boat all summer with no problems.

We tried calling on the Marine CB (27 MHz). It was frustrating. We couldn't raise Port Welshpool Coast Guard or Melbourne Radio, but we could hear multiple Coast Guard stations along the NSW east coast but they couldn't hear us.

We debated whether this was a correct time to activate an EPIRB. We figured there was no immediate threat to life. We were tucked in behind



Dannevig Island out of the strong wind, BUT our families were ashore in Tidal River, and didn't know exactly where we were, and we knew that some alarms would start to be raised. In the end we decided to activate the EPIRB by throwing it overboard attached to a lanyard.

We waited. And in a little under 50 minutes, a fixed wing aircraft appeared from the west. We released a smoke flare and the plane flew directly to our position dipped its wings and made contact by 27 MHz radio and in a very friendly way said they knew where we were and not to worry. They planned to circle around until the police helicopter arrived and then they were flying back to Moorabbin airport.

Sure enough, the helicopter arrived but didn't make radio contact, which we thought was a bit strange. It then disappeared toward Norman Beach. Sometime later we were called up by the Tidal River ranger station. The rangers had 27 MHz but not the police helicopter. Interesting set up for a rescue aircraft! But I couldn't understand why our initial distress call hadn't been picked up by the rangers. Never did find out.

We were told that the helicopter would lift us out two at a time, and to secure the boat and wait. Our lives were important, the boat wasn't. I could see the logic but I was a bit reluctant to "lose the boat".

We shifted the anchor away from the rocks and let out all the anchor rope and double tied it off to the boat. We lashed all our diving gear together, and to the boat, to keep everything together. We also attached a

long float line so that in the event that the boat was swamped, we had a chance of retrieving it.

The helicopter duly appeared overhead. The winchman appeared at the door and started lowering. Now remember, a strong NE wind was blowing. Naturally the helicopter was above the level of the island being buffeted by the strong gusty wind, while we were floating on a mill pond. The aim was for the winch man to be lowered into the boat. As the winchman got closer to our boat, he was swinging wildly from side to side over the boat like a huge pendulum. We asked if he wanted help. He gave us a terse NO. After several swings past, my dive buddy Graeme decided this was ridiculous so he grabbed him on a swing past. He duly landed in the boat. I can't remember if he introduced himself, but he was a man of few words.

Who is the boat owner? Me. You go last.

Who wants to go first?

Graeme and Jen went first. They were each secured one at a time by a sling under the arm pits, and with a thumbs up from the winchman, the cable was drawn back to the helicopter. Once they were both on board, the helicopter disappeared over the top of the island leaving Tom (some of you would remember him as the owner of Yellow Boats that operated a dive charter business for many years) and I to ponder the ultimate outcome, and how the hell I might get my boat back.

When the helicopter reappeared, the winchman was lowered and duly captured by us. He had accepted by this stage that he did in fact need help! Tom went first and then it was my turn to be secured and lifted skyward.

Once I was in the sling, we started our ascent. My head was level with the winchman's chest. I had parachuted several times and wasn't overly afraid of heights, so I was keen to have a look at my "new surroundings". I started looking down. Wow, my 17 ft boat looked bloody small. I remember wondering why the decks of most fibreglass boats are white and thinking it would be very difficult to spot it in a heavy sea with white caps all around.

I was trying to look around at the Prom scenery on the way up when an arm encircled me and forced my face into the guy's chest.

Ok, he didn't want me to look around! He could have said something, but I guess he was the strong silent type.

By the time we got level with the helicopter door, we were spinning madly. Remember we were in a strong wind. I wondered how this was going to play out. Next thing I knew "my man" had launched us into the helicopter and landed with me on my back with him on top. I couldn't help thinking we could have done this

better if he had bothered communicating with me. But hey, strong silent type! I had lots of questions, but helicopters are very noisy places without ear muffs and communication equipment. Great views though.

A quick helicopter ride to Norman Beach, and I joined my other buddies on the beach in front of quite a crowd. It was the Australia day weekend! Our families by this stage had figured it was us who were the focus of attention and were also on the beach.

We chatted with the rangers and Tidal River police officer. Not the rescue police, they had taken their toy down the beach and didn't seem to want to talk.

I wanted to know whether they thought we had done the right thing in activating the EPIRB? Also important questions like:

- Did I need to pay for the service?
- Did Insurance cover the costs?
- Did they need to record our details?
- What next?

The rangers and Tidal River police officer said as far as they knew, that was it.

I then started to question how I might get the boat back. We figured we would need to wait until the wind subsided and then try to get help from Port Welshpool Coast Guard. In the meantime, the Tidal River police officer found a boat owner in the campground willing to help, but conditions were just too rugged for the small whaler boat.

At about the same time, we noticed a yacht entering Norman Bay to shelter from the weather. We went up to the Ranger Station and called up the yacht. The skipper said yes he would help retrieve the boat once the wind had abated.

All good. We would need to stay overnight and hopefully get it back the next day.

Later in the afternoon, the skipper of the yacht called up and asked what colour my boat was. Blue hull, white deck. Well he said, it is currently being brought into Norman Bay at very high speed towed behind an abalone diver's boat. Of course the ab divers would have been out. Conditions were perfect in the lee of the islands and when has an ab diver worried about a bit of a rough water ride out to his fishing ground?

We raced down to the beach and there was the ab diver's boat, also a Haines Hunter, but dwarfing my 17 ft version. We retrieved the boat and chatted briefly to the diver. I quickly found \$50 to give him and thank him for the "boat rescue" and he was on his way.

When we looked inside the boat we realised just how rugged the tow back had been. The side pockets had all be ripped off, and gear was strewn everywhere, but we had the boat and all the gear back all in the same day.

And what a day it was. Excellent diving followed by a helicopter trip over the islands and Norman Bay.

But the EPIRB had done its job well. What an amazing system! I kept thinking what it would have been like spending a night out there, putting up occasional flares, hoping someone would see them for the short time they are active. I didn't like the chances we would have been spotted.

And it turned out that it was the battery that was at fault after all.

And the whole story was reported in the South Gippsland newspaper, the Mirror, on the Wednesday. How embarrassing!

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Deep charge your boat battery at the start of each diving season.**
- **Write the date the battery was installed in big letters on the side of the battery.**
- **Replace the battery every 2 to 3 years.**
- **Buy the best and biggest battery you can.**
- **If there is room, fit two batteries.**
- **Make sure you have a battery isolation switch and use it.**
- **Carry at least two sets of flares.**
- **Install a VHF radio.**
- **Install an EPIRB, and as Stuart said in his article, *use it early, when things go wrong.***

Radio beacon triggered rescue at sea

The rescue of four people from a stricken boat off Wilsons Promontory last week was initiated by an emergency position indicator radio beacon (EPIRB) carried by the boat owner especially for emergency use.

They anchored the boat on the western side of Dennevig Island at the Glennies Group, and after completing their diving prepared to return to Tidal River at about 2 p.m. However, the 135-horsepower motor refused to start, and attempts to repair the problem were unsuccessful. Attempts

Mr. Mosse praised police for their efforts and said his party was extremely thankful to have been rescued from their plight. He also recommended other boat users consider carrying an EPIRB, quoting it as the best \$200 worth he had ever purchased. The following day a local abalone diver



SS Empire Gladstone

by *Ian Scholey*

The penultimate dive on our recent trip to the Sapphire Coast was on the wreck of the SS Empire Gladstone. This wreck lies south of Haycock Rock and is very exposed to surf. On the day we dived here the conditions were OK but it was pretty surgy. We had to be very careful as there is sharp metal sticking up all over the place just waiting for a diver to be swept into it. The wreck is dominated by three huge boilers and the prop shaft which runs for some distance down the wreck site.

During World War II both the British and American constructed vast numbers of warships and supply ships. In both cases, they picked a small number of "core" designs and built numerous almost identical ships. This procedure enabled the ships to be built cheaply and quickly and produce ships that were easy to adapt to common uses. There were some 1300 to 1400 such ships built in the United Kingdom alone. The British ships were generally about 7,100 tons gross displacement and 430 to 450 feet long. Many shipyards were used, including those at Newcastle, Glasgow and Sunderland (Belfast).

In 1944 a new ship was launched from the Shipbuilding Corporation Ltd (Wear Branch) at Sunderland in Belfast, Northern Ireland. This was the third of 11 identical ships built here. The new ship was christened SS Empire Gladstone in accordance with the policy that all such ships bore the Empire prefix (a huge number of American Liberty ships were called John). The new ship was 7,090 tons and 450 feet overall (430 feet waterline) and 56 feet wide. Owned by the British Ministry of War Transport, the Empire Gladstone was powered by a triple expansion steam engine built by George Clark (1938) Ltd at Sunderland with three coal powered boilers supplying

the steam. The Lloyds Register of 1944-45 says that it was managed by J. Chambers and Company.

The ship was used for the rest of the war for transporting supplies around the Allied fronts. On 4 August 1944 she was at Tilbury in the Thames River, England (near Woolwich). Together with three other ships, the Finlay, Paul Benjamin and the Henry Austin, she loaded aboard the troops from the First Belgian Brigade. This was a motorised army group established with Belgians who had escaped Europe. It had three Independent Motorised Units which had armoured vehicles (not tanks). The three ships took on board over 2,200 troops and 500 vehicles. The Empire Gladstone took on the First Unit and the Battery of Artillery. At 1830 hours the ships left Tilbury and formed a convoy to Whistable which is on the southern side of the Thames Estuary, in Kent.

At 1815 (or 2015) hours on 6 August 1944 the convoy left Whistable bound for Normandy, France. At 1000 hours on 7 August 1944 the ships started unloading their men and equipment. The troops unloaded Courseulles and the vehicles at Arromanches. After the war, the ship remained under the ownership of the Ministry of Transport and in 1949 she was managed by Blane Steamships Ltd. She appears to have been re-engined at some time as the Lloyd's Register of 1949-50 indicates that the triple expansion steam engine was built by Markham and Co Ltd, Chesterfield. As indicated, the British Government still had ownership of the ship and the managers had rechartered the vessel to Adelaide Steamship Company Ltd about August 1949. Prior to this, the ship was in Australia on 5 May 1949 as she sailed to Fremantle (I am not sure where from).

On Friday 1 September 1950, the SS Empire Gladstone left Whyalla in South Australia for Sydney

and Newcastle in New South Wales. Her cargo was iron ore for the BHP steelworks in Newcastle as well as 159 Dodge utes (variously reported as being bodies or whole vehicles). I have also been advised (in March 2015) by Wal Greenrich, who was 10 years old at the time, that the bodies were in fact Holden FJs. He told me that he saw them being taken off salvage boats onto the wharf.

There was a crew of 44 on board (I am not sure if this number included the skipper). The afternoon of Tuesday 5 September 1950 saw the Empire Gladstone pass Green Cape to the south of Eden on New South Wales Far South Coast. As night fell, the skipper of the ship, Captain John Lennie, OBE, a Scotsman on his last voyage before retiring, ordered the ship to keep close to the shore to avoid the current.

Just before 8 pm on 5 September 1950, the Fourth Engineer, Mr O. Eynon, who had just taken over watch, reported that the ship was steering for a point to the sea of a lighthouse. However, suddenly the lights taken to be the lighthouse were surrounded by many more lights. This was the township of Merimbula. The "lighthouse" turned out to be the lights of the Merimbula Wharf. Anyway, action was taken and the ship turned hard to starboard. However, at 7.55 pm the Empire Gladstone's stern section hit the reef of Haystack Rock. This is eight kilometres South-East of Merimbula and the outermost point of the southern headland of Merimbula. She was stuck hard. Attempts were made to power the ship off the reef but the engine would not turn over. It was reported that the prop was jammed in the rocks and the rudder bent.

When it was obvious that the ship would not be able to get off the reef herself, the crew were ordered to take positions near the lifeboats. The ship was not noticed by locals until 6 am the next morning. Two fishermen, Jack Warn and Ben Buckland collected together rescue gear and travelled the short distance to the wreck site. Many other small boats followed. The seas were reported as being calm.

On Wednesday 6 September 1950, Captain G. A. Johns, a Lloyds assessor, inspected the ship and reported that the ship was already mortally wounded, her back broken with water already in both holds. The bow and stern sagged, ballast tanks damaged and the whole ship expected to split into two pieces. He stated that the ship would never be moved. The Sydney Morning Herald reported on 7 September 1950 that the crew were still on board the ship and that they had waved to the reporter as he flew overhead in a light aircraft the previous day. On 7

September 1950, 10 of the crew (there were only three Australians) were put ashore by the ship's lifeboats with the remaining 34 staying to unload the ship's cargo. During that day, a number of trawlers from Eden were used to move the car bodies from the wreck to Merimbula. By 7 pm a total of 24 had been successfully moved to shore. By this time the water was 20 feet deep in the forward holds and was also seeping into the engine room.

The ship's cargo was valued at £750,000, but most of this was the iron ore and impossible to remove. Until about 11 September 1950, the trawlers continued to remove the car bodies until they were all safely ashore. Around this time the weather deteriorated and the seas increased dramatically. The vast number of the crew were still on board and they hurriedly abandoned ship into life-rafts, one powered. The trawlers towed the rafts to Merimbula. Of interest are two crewmen, Fireman Harris and Ernest Wood. Mr Harris was from London and the Herald reported that this was the ninth time he had been shipwrecked! He said "I've had it. I'm going to find myself a nice quiet job ashore. Even cats only have nine lives, and I've used up my quota." Mr Wood, the donkeygreaser, of Hull, had been shipwrecked four times before.

The bell of the SS Empire Gladstone was salvaged at some time. In 1995, Lori and Russell Chesnutt of New Zealand purchased a boat called Nadgee (which is the name of the nature reserve to the south of Eden). This boat was built in 1968 for the late Doug Everett of Eden. The boat has a bell on it which is obviously the Empire Gladstone's. It is encribed "Empire Gladstone, Sunderland, 1944". Mr and Mrs Chesnutt still have the bell on their boat. One of the anchors was salvaged and is in Merimbula.

Today, the wreck of SS Empire Gladstone lies at a maximum depth of just over 10 metres.




 A photograph of an elderly woman with white hair, wearing a dark blue jacket, sitting at a laboratory bench. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. In front of her is a large white microscope. To the right, a computer monitor displays a colorful, branching biological specimen, likely a hydroid. The background shows various laboratory equipment and supplies.

Jan Watson

Jan (Jeanette) Watson sadly passed away in November 2021. Jan was a Life Member of VSAG and an absolute pioneer in scuba diving, marine biology and ignoring social stereotypes. Her contribution to the world, at many different levels, has been both wonderful and immense. As a Club, it has been a privilege to have Jan as one of our members and as part of our history. In memoriam, we are republishing an article on Jan that was in the “*Celebrating VSAG @ 60: 1954-2014*” book.

There were very few female diving members of the VSAG in the early years, but one woman who took up diving in the late 1950s is still diving today (2014). We are very lucky indeed at VSAG to be able to celebrate the accomplishments and significant contributions in the field of scientific diving of Dr Jeanette (Jan) Watson.

Jan was one of the earliest female scuba divers in Australia. She became a pioneer in the field of scientific diving and is now an environmental consultant and a world-leading researcher of hydroids, which are small but complex marine organisms.

Jan learned to dive with a small group of friends, including John Noonan and Pat Reynolds, in 1959 in the Melbourne University Beaurepaire swimming pool just after it opened. She gained the skills to take her first sea dive from Col Ferrier’s old fishing boat in southern Port Phillip at Pope’s Eye — when

she thought she was going to drown! There has been no looking back since that day! She estimates she has clocked up over 10,000 dives and has loved every one of them.

It was on one Jan’s early dives at Pope’s Eye that she first saw hydroids, sparking a curiosity that continues to burn 50 years on. She has committed a lifetime career to researching hydroids, which are small, often colourful invertebrate creatures related to jellies, anemones and corals that form clusters on rocks and seaweed. Hydroids are incredibly diverse (over 6000 species have been documented world-wide) and range in appearance from fine transparent, fern-like branches to bright flower-shaped organisms. Jan is particularly passionate about the rich biodiversity of our temperate seas and holds the discovery of new families of hydroids and algae at 75 metres depth in 1969 in the Great Australian Bight. She remembers this as one of her most memorable and exciting dives. Jan has been Managing Director of her biological consulting company, Marine Science & Ecology, for 40 years.

By using her consultancy business, which is quite probably the oldest environmental consulting business in Australia to help fund her independent research, she has dived in the UK, France, Italy, Japan, New Guinea, Indonesia, New Zealand and the USA. She has written books and contributed to dozens of scientific papers published in various prominent national and international scientific publications.

JAN WATSON - IN MEMORIAM



hydroids on seagrass. In 1991 she gained a PhD in Biology from Deakin University.

Over the past 40 years, using her background in applied chemistry, geology and marine biology Jan carved out a successful consulting career. She has an ADAS Commercial diving licence necessary to secure consultancy work.

Jan is engaged these days as a consultant by private and government enterprises, and large companies such as BHP, to conduct environmental surveys for dredging and outfall monitoring programs. Her independent consulting work has taken her to fascinating places which she would never have visited as a recreational diver. The flexibility to determine the type of work she undertakes has enabled her to develop a wide experience in her field and she still works very hard to stay up to date and in demand.

With a very practical attitude towards SCUBA diving Jan works by the adage "If you can't look after yourself underwater you shouldn't be there" and it would appear that it has worked well for her over the decades. She has had a few near miss incidents, but otherwise no serious accidents, or incidents whilst diving.

At 85 years of age and with no intention of retirement, Jan is the oldest known practising occupational and scientific diver in Australia. Her love of diving has carried her through a lifelong career and has been passed down to her daughter (also a scientific diver and consultant) and her twin grandchildren, who are all passionate divers. Due to the pressures of running a consultancy business, she drifted away from VSAG, but still fondly remembers her early diving years and dive buddies in VSAG. What a remarkable career and achievement.



In 1970, Jan was invited by Geosurveys of Australia to make a collection of marine life in South Australia's Investigator Strait, during geological mapping in a search for oil bearing strata. Jan and Jonas Radus, a surveyor from Adelaide, comprised the diving team working from the 25 metre motor ketch SAORI based at Edithburgh. Their repetitive dives took them into deep waters and although they had access to a recompression chamber, which was set up on the Edithburgh jetty, neither of them ever wanted to use it. Their dives on hookah-supplied-air were often in 30 to 50 metres of water and the tidal currents were quite strong. Their dives were taxing, with often up to 80 metres of hose streaming out behind them, so it was not long before mild symptoms of the bends became apparent.

They approached the management, explaining that continued repetitive dives would lead to a severe case of bends and could support a team of divers be found. As it turned out, the chief engineer at the time had two post-graduate students Adelaide University studying the metabolic changes of nitrogen-oxygen balance in the blood, which they were yet to try in a human study, they had been working on sheep! They asked Jan and Jonas if they would be prepared to be "guinea pigs" in a trial of possible benefits of oxygen flushing. They agreed and the following day, large oxygen cylinders were loaded onto the SAORI and after each dive they were clapped into medical oxygen masks for 20 minutes as soon as they clambered back on deck after each dive. The study confirmed the graduates' hunch that oxygen flushing would be beneficial and oxygen 'chasers' have since become standard practise for deep diving. Jan is quite proud to have been one of the two "guinea pigs" here in Australia for what is now a world -wide practise.

Also during the 1980s, Jan dedicated her spare hours toward a thesis on the ecology of marine

2021 VSAG Xmas Party

While COVID stopped us from doing a lot of diving during 2021, it did not stop the Club from having an absolute ripper of a Xmas Party. Once again we had it down at the Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron with glorious views over Port Phillip Bay.

We had a fantastic turnout with nearly fifty Club members, partners and many of the Life Members including Des Williams, Pat Reynolds, Mick Jeacle, Herb Epstein, John Lawler and Ian Scholey. We had a selection of gourmet BBQ'ed meats that were gently caressed with flames by Liam Heatherich, Angus Stuart-Adams and Herb Epstein under the expert guidance of Mickileus Pickleus (and his liquid friend). Club members brought an awesome selection of delicious salads and deserts, and Stu Cousins and Donna amplified everything with their barrel-roasted chicken and turkey and entrée's of smoked salmon. The end result was the most incredible banquet you can imagine.

After dinner, we had a presentation of Club Awards for the Year as we were not able to do these in person at the General Meeting. Christine Reynolds received a very special plaque that included one of the first editions of Fathoms and the last one she did



2021 VSAG Xmas Party

in her five years as Fathoms editor. Ian Scholey was Club Member of the Year with his name added to the scuba tank Board on which he and John Lawler must account for around 60 bar of the cylinders.

It really was a fantastic evening and wonderful to get together with so many Club Members. We have already booked the BMYS for next year's party!

- Matthijs Smith



NEW MEMBERS

Steve Dawson

I was given my open water course as a gift for my birthday 3 years ago to share another interest together with Mel and provide another option of travel adventures that are not to the snow!

After completing the first weekend (class and pool sessions) we decided that we should book onto a dive trip to Vanuatu to dive the SS Coolidge a month later. With 'Melbourne being Melbourne' the shore and boat dives to finish off the open water ticket the following weekend were cancelled due to the bad weather.... as were the ones the next 2 weekends. I ended up completing with just 3 days to spare. Needless to say, the dive trip was amazing and has opened a whole new world to me to enjoy!

It may have been on a work trip to the Philippines when I snuck in a weekend of diving that blew my mind the most. The unlimited visibility and the



number of animals including large turtles and electric clams and the warm water was just too good to be true.

But all this just made me keen to get more diving under my belt and see more and more, and the best way I thought was to join a club, so here I am. Obviously Covid has put the handbrake on but I am hoping that from here on out we can get back into the water far more often!

Michele Braid

In 2016 my sister Dianne announced her plans to visit the Great Barrier Reef - with or without me - on her next trip out from the UK. Di is an expatriate Aussie currently living in the Peak District near Manchester where there are not a lot of beaches handy. However, there's a thriving BSAC community who do lots of diving in the nearby lakes and quarries. Sounds like fun, and of course, who doesn't want to dive on the GBR?

I completed my Open Water with Academy of Scuba in time for the big trip, and headed to Port Douglas in December 2016 with my sister. We dived with an experienced guide, and as a bonus, a diver interested in small critters, so we got to see many amazing tiny things, as well as turtles, sharks, barracudas, moray eels and giant clams.

Last year between lockdowns, I returned to Queensland and completed my Advanced Open Water ticket on the beautiful Agincourt Ribbon Reefs. We are spoilt for great dive locations in Australia, and



Victoria has some of the most interesting marine life. I love seahorses, octopi, blue devils, nudibranchs and weedy sea dragons, and I will always be in awe of our amazing smooth rays.

This year, with my favourite dive buddy so far away, I joined VSAG hoping to make some new friends and to be part of a community that loves our marine environment, and contributes to its conservation.

NEW MEMBERS

James Chong

I was introduced to scuba diving in 2000 but panicked on a try dive at Cairns. Never again said I.

Then on a trip to Khao Lak, Thailand I had a fantastic instructor who was able to get my fears sorted. I am no scuba expert, but I can competently not get into too much trouble. Still get lost and faff around more than I wish. I was introduced to Reef Check in Maldives and was hooked.

I am a passionate citizen science advocate and a committee member of Australian Citizen Science Association (www.acsa.org). My focus is on marine citizen science and conservation with interest in kelp bed restoration in Port Phillip and parts of the Great



Southern Reef. I am coordinating the project to establish a local group of Reef Life Survey divers to cover the central coast of Victoria. (<https://reeflifesurvey.com/>) RLSF is always looking for keen volunteer divers and boat owners interested to contribute towards marine data collection for research and reef management.

Alistair King

Quite a few years ago - in my misspent youth - I was pretty much obsessed with skindiving and spearfishing and spent summer holidays doing little else. I always thought I'd do SCUBA (though maybe drawing the line at the cave diving my big sister did for a few years) but somehow never got around to it. After many years focused on work and family, I suddenly realised that it was now or never, so I went out and did my OW and AOW (being very much the novelty as the middle-aged guy among the twenty-year-olds!)

Like riding a bike, I found a few of my underwater skills still seemed to be there, although I did find it a tad more technical with tanks than without! It's been great reconnecting with the underwater world and finding that my fascination with the denizens of the deep is still there.

I finished up my paid day job in State government in July. I still have roles (unpaid, sadly!) on Boards in the not-for-profit space that keep me engaged and busy. Coupled with a bit of travel with my partner and camping and hiking with buddies (when lockdowns permit) this phase is proving to be a fantastic renaissance following several years of intense work.



It was really great to discover VSAG, and I look forward to getting fully in the swing and meeting more members in the coming year!



Getting Back In The Water

by **Peter Mosse**

Winter and Covid have conspired to keep most of us, and our equipment, out of the water for a long time. As the lockdowns ease, and hopefully the diving weather improves, take some time to get ready to dive again and make those first few dives simple ones.

Regulators

- Check for spiders or other insects in your second stages. Give them a good shake and purge them.
- Attach your regulator to a tank and turn it on slowly. Purge both second stages in water.
- Are either of the diaphragms sticking?
- Are either free flowing?
- Take a few breaths. Do they both breath freely?
- Make sure you thoroughly check both of your second stage regulators.
- Spray soapy water over the first stage and look for bubbles. If you see them, remove the regulator and reseal it. If the leaks continue, have the regulator serviced.
- Leave the regulator on the tank and the tank turned on for several hours. Does it hold pressure or does it deflate? If it does deflate, that suggests a leak that should be located. If it only deflates very slowly that is OK. A slow leak could also suggest a leak from the tank valve O ring but that should have been detected with the soapy water.
- Check the tank O rings for cracks or other damage. Replace as necessary, but ensure they are the correct size. If in doubt visit your dive shop.

Buoyancy Compensators

- Shake out the inflation mouth piece.

- Inflate and deflate the BCD manually. Is the button sticking or does it depress and release smoothly?
- Attach the SCUBA feed. Does it fit on and off easily? Inflate the BCD. Does the button depress and release fully easily or is it sticking? This is something you do not want to happen underwater.
- Check you can “pop” the SCUBA feed off using one hand only.
- Fully inflate the vest and leave it for several hours. Check that it has not deflated. If it does, there is a leak somewhere. Immerse the BCD and inflation hose in water and look for leaks or use the soapy water spray again.

Yourself the Diver

- Perhaps you have dropped in fitness over this period and maybe put on a little weight. Remember, when everything goes right, diving is easy and not very physically demanding, BUT when things go wrong it can be very demanding
- Do some activity to bring your fitness levels up.
- Regular strenuous walking
- Fin swimming in a pool
- Exercise classes
- Running, cycling, swimming
- Assemble your gear and put it on. Make sure the “muscle memory” gets it right. Do you automatically know which way to fit the regulator to the tank? Is the BCD inflator hose in the correct position?

Back in the Water

- Take the time to do a couple of easy dives in favourable conditions first. Just get the feel of diving again. Make sure you feel comfortable before heading off to one of your favourite deeper sites. And gradually work up to deeper dives

SKILLS & TECHNIQUE

Fin Lightly In Our World

by *Peter Mosse*

Fins and Finning

Each time we dive, we have a direct impact on the underwater environment, from where we anchor, to how and where we move through the water. We each have a responsibility to use low-impact diving techniques. And finning is a major part of that. Finning is a skill that needs to be developed.

Unfortunately new divers are seldom trained on how to use different finning techniques, or even made aware that there are different techniques. You are given a pair of fins, or buy a pair with poor guidance from the shop assistant, and away you go. Very often dredging the bottom and leaving a trail of sand and damaged invertebrate life in your wake. And that is the way you tend to remain. Even advanced dive courses don't routinely consider finning in any detail. The exception to that is cave diver training where different finning techniques may be considered in detail.

On my first VSAG club diving trip to Jervis Bay, I remember one dive where two club members were swimming in front of me, both dredging a clear path through the sand with their fins! I also noted some poor gear configurations. Back on the boat I agonised for a long time over whether to raise my observations and recommendations with them. I was at that time, the new kid on the block in terms of club membership. In the end I did raise my observations with them, and I am pleased to say they were both really receptive. Since then they have made major changes to their gear and hopefully finning techniques as well.

My son in law bought a pair of fins at a reputable dive shop (Figure 1, right hand fin). On his first dive, I watched in horror. After the dive I had a look at the fins. They looked great, but they were way too long and way too stiff. I undertook to find a more suitable fin for him. Shorter and much



more flexible. He loves them and I love the reduced damage to my favourite dive sites.

There are too many types of fins to consider in detail and, because it is not easy in the diving industry to try out equipment, you can often only purchase based on a salesperson's advice and recommendation. Also, people like slightly different things and with different foot anatomy, there is no one fin suits all. However there are some general guidelines.

In general, choose a shorter rather than longer fin. Choose a more flexible fin rather than a stiff fin. Choose a fin with smaller "side walls" rather than



SKILLS & TECHNIQUE

wider ones (Figure 2). Wide ones are good for cave diving but are not necessary for ocean diving. They also tend to add to the stiffness of the fins.

And **do not use** the very long free diving fins for SCUBA diving. They are specialised fins and do an incredible amount of damage while SCUBA diving. If you like free diving, and SCUBA diving, buy two different pairs.

A good test (which isn't easy to do with lots of different fins) is with your tank and weights off, see if you can kick up and over the side of an average 16 to 17 foot dive boat. Can you generate and maintain the thrust. An alternative test can be conducted in a pool. In deep water and your body vertical, use your fins to drive you as high as possible and stay high for as long as you can. Watch the clock at the end of the pool.

What you can also do on a club dive, is borrow someone else's fins and try them out. You will be amazed at the difference. Try them for normal finning, but also try the vertical kick test described above.

Many years ago I selected my current fins (Figure 1, middle fin) based on pool tests. Timed 50m swims in a 25 m pool. Why did I use 50m? Because it required me to turn 180 degrees at the end. Try doing that with long stiff fins, it will slow your time dramatically. Underwater manoeuvrability is important as well. My small flexible split fins won hands down. Because I am concerned they may

stop making these, I have purchased a spare pair! I hate it when I have to go to wearing booties or a dry suit because my open heel fins are nowhere near as nice.

How Can We Minimise The Impact?

For every dive, plan to preserve the dive site. While diving, be aware of your position and your movements. In particular where are your feet and therefore your fins? Make sure you only move your feet when you need to.

Think of your "circle of influence" as you swim (Figure 3). When you are well up from the bottom, or well away from a wall, you can afford to relax and spread out. Closer to the bottom or a near a wall, not so much. Your circle of influence includes your body, your equipment, as well as your finning, and it also includes the wash from your fins.

Develop and Practice Alternative Finning Techniques

One of the most important skills in diving is selecting the best finning technique to limit impact. The standard finning technique involves long legs with alternating motion from the hip with some bending of the knee and ankles. This risks direct connection with items on the bottom, including sand and silt and generates a significant downward wash.



A diver's circle of influence using three different finning techniques.

SKILLS & TECHNIQUE

There are other techniques that reduce wash and limit leg movement and reduce your circle of influence. Try all these techniques, master them and use them as you need.

□ **Modified frog kick.** Keep your thighs together and your knees up and bent. Kick out from the ankles, keeping your knees still. It has a medium circle of influence because of the wash from your fins.

□ **Modified flutter kick.** For tight locations such as delicate swim throughs to limit sideways and downward kicking and wash. Kick from the knees with feet pointed slightly upward to stop downward wash to a silty floor. In tighter spaces, kick from the ankles only.

□ **Shuffle kick.** It has the smallest circle of influence. Keep your knees together and your feet above your knees. Shuffle your feet back and forward horizontally, pivoting at the knees to create a slow glide. This technique has minimal fin blade movement, which minimises wash and protects walls, roofs and floors. Use breathing for fine buoyancy control. But remember, don't just squeeze through a tight space because you can. Only do so if you are sure you will not damage the encrusting life.

□ **Single fin one on top of the other.** Keep one leg and its fin fully extended and simply kick your other leg and fin on top of the other. This reduces the down wash.

□ **Finger-walking and pull-and-glide.** Good for gliding through tight spaces. Keeping the body still and as horizontal as possible, carefully place your fingers on the bottom and pull yourself along. Maintain good trim. Try to put your fingers on bare rock or sand rather than sponges and other invertebrate.

And remember if you go into a tight space and you realise you cannot go through. Do NOT try to turn around. That will most likely cause a massive amount of damage. Finger walk backwards as gently as you can.

Keep all your equipment clipped as close to your body as possible, particularly gauges, regulators, SMB and reels, and any stage cylinders. Too often I see SPGs, second stage regulators, torches and reels damaging the very things we come to see. Firstly determine whether you really need them. If not, cut them off. If you do, shorten the attachment as much as possible, and CLIP THEM OFF! Remove the danglies!

Balance your weights so your body is as horizontal as possible. Body trim can change. Realise that if you lift your head to look forward during your power stroke, it will act like a rudder and bring you upwards and usually your fins down closer to the bottom and potential damage.

At times it is necessary to touch down on the bottom, usually when taking photographs. I personally think this is OK as long as the touch down area is carefully selected, but Barrier Reef guides do not like one finger touch downs or any sort of touch down.

When you chose to leave the bottom or you recognise your fins are too low or close to the bottom, don't use your fins. Arch your body upwards gently and take a few breaststroke strokes with your arms. Start with small sculling strokes and build up to bigger ones to pull you away. Once you are clear you can resume finning. And, don't use your BCD to lift you away. If you get that wrong, you can find yourself in an uncontrolled buoyant ascent.

If you find your feet are just continually sinking despite your best efforts it may be your fins. They may be heavy and negatively buoyant. Borrow some other fins. See how they float in the water and try a pair that sink the least and see if that helps your foot position.

And remember, none of us is perfect and we will cause some damage. Just try to limit it. I know when I am diving and I am trying my hardest and I feel a crunch on my fins, I feel absolutely gutted.



A Bent Experience

by **David Geekie**

After Covid restrictions lifted in Melbourne, I was keen to take every opportunity to dive. I had spent the 4-month lockdown working with BlazeAid at Bruthen rebuilding fire affected fences and was ready for some serious diving. The first trip was to the York Peninsula and Rapid Bay with Ian Scholey and Peter Beaumont in December. Given we were unable to travel overseas and interstate travel was risky, I had my first extended time in Melbourne since retiring and wanted to take every opportunity to dive locally. My VSAG friends provided support to dive on every reasonable opportunity. It was a fantastic time which included a trip to Cape Conran to dive Beware Reef, multiple overnight trips to Inverloch, and Cape Day trips to the Barwon River and Queenscliff were also taken, it was a fantastic time.

On 18 March we launched Dire Straits at Queenscliff and met up with Ian Scholey to dive the Courier just outside the heads. Just after Ian dropped a shotline, we noticed another merchant ship coming out. The report on timing of shipping from Lonsdale had been misheard. Ian stayed to keep an eye on the shot line.

I took my crew into the area near the Golden Arch where some had a relatively shallow dive. We then relocated to the Coogee. I dived to 31.7m and surfaced after 41 minutes, which included around 9 minutes of deco, the last deco stop and safety stop being taken at 5m. I was using a relatively new dive computer as well as my old Oceanic.

We then headed inside the Rip to give the dive crew an opportunity to dive a flood slack, I manned the boat while having my surface interval. After recovering the

crew I headed back outside to dive the J5 with Ian. We once again went into deco and I followed the new computer's guidance and added one change to my diving by doing the last deco stop at 3m rather than 5m. This was based on advice from my local dive shop who had sold me the new computer, the benefit of the shallower deco being a shorter time delay before surfacing. On both dives I did the normal 5 min safety stop after completing decompression.

While washing out the boat and motor at Queenscliff I felt an unusual niggle in my right shoulder and commented on this to the crew. One crew member made a comment that one of my dive entries had been a little unusual and it was probably related to that.

At bedtime the niggle had not improved so I consulted a couple of references. The only symptom I had was the niggle in my shoulder, but my GP felt I should still contact the Alfred Hyperbaric staff to discuss. I rang the Alfred but when they put me through to this department it rang out. At that point I went to bed.

Overnight I was a little uncomfortable and felt at times my shoulder was throbbing in time with my pulse and this did not improve. The following morning, I rang the Alfred and discussed the symptoms with the Hyperbaric doctor. It was a short conversation with the only comment from the other end being "How quickly can you be here at Emergency? (it was a Sunday) I arrived 45 minutes later and presented myself to the receptionist and started to explain why I was there. Almost immediately, another staff member interrupted and asked the receptionist to 'book David in, he has been talking to hyperbaric and is going into the chamber'.

Upstairs I was given a more detailed interview and asked to perform some cognitive tests, all of which I passed. My dive log was considered as well. I kept saying the discomfort was relatively minor, they were not convinced and commented the only way to confirm would be to do the treatment. Very shortly I found myself being prepared to enter the smaller compartment of the chamber for an 18m dive for 4 hrs with a male nurse as company. We were the only two in the chamber, I wore a helmet with an oxygen supply except for small breaks, the nurse only took oxygen for the last half hour or so. Apparently, many cases feel immediate relief but I did not feel any significant change, increasing my belief I had pulled a muscle.

After the treatment I reported this, expecting it to be the end but no, I was told to be back at 9am Monday morning at the main entrance for a second treatment. That evening I became aware I had had a complete recovery, the discomfort had disappeared. However, I reported to the main hospital entrance and while undergoing the COVID protocol another staff member standing nearby interrupted and stated he was there to take me up to the chamber.

Once there I announced I was symptom free so could save them the time and effort of another treatment, but after a discussion they only reduced the time of the second treatment slightly. This was carried out in a single chamber consisting of a horizontal clear tube that was filled with 100% oxygen. They were very serious about what I wore into that chamber, even deodorant was not allowed.

After completing this treatment, I was told to lay off diving until my case was reviewed in 5 – 6 weeks. During the review I was asked to confirm that no other symptoms had become evident which I could confirm and what diving practices I would alter as a result of this experience. My response was that the major change was altering the minimum deco depth back to 6m which I had already done. Avoiding reverse profile dives, where the second dive is deeper than the first dive, and reducing deco dives – particularly on second dives would also be on the list.

VSAG has taken up opportunities to tour the Alfred Hyperbaric facility several times over the years and one comment that stuck in my mind from the presentation is that it 'was only a matter of "when rather than if" a regular recreational diver would require hyperbaric treatment. They stressed that even when strictly following our diving computers it was only be a matter of time and that the treatment was simple and effective as long as it was applied ASAP after symptoms showed.

So, if you experience any symptoms of decompression illness after a dive ring the Alfred Hyperbaric unit. If

they do not answer, ring back and let the switchboard know, they will contact the Hyperbaric directly. I was amazed at their competence and the personalised care shown. Arriving at reception of a busy major city hospital twice to find you are expected was certainly beyond my expectations.

Editorial Note

For those of you who might be a bit rusty on your knowledge of decompression illness signs and symptoms, I have summarised them here with help from John Lippman's books on the subject. The signs and symptoms vary from very mild, to severe and life threatening. They relate to where the bubbles are located in the body. Some of the more common signs and symptoms are listed below:

Skin

- Rash
- Itchy and blotchy skin
- Mild to deep pain or discomfort in one or more joints (often confused with a sprain or a strain)

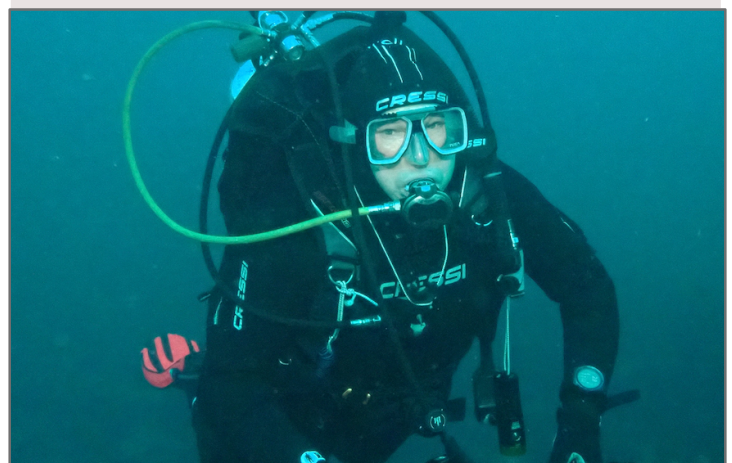
Lungs

- Coughing or difficulty breathing

Central Nervous System

- Dizziness, fatigue. Headaches and nausea
- Numbness/tingling
- Weakness
- Confusion
- Convulsions
- Difficulty passing urine, loss of bladder or bowel control
- Lack of coordination, loss of balance
- Paralysis
- Hearing changes

In the words of one of the very early books on Underwater Medicine by Miles and Mackay, "any symptom however vague after exposure to pressure should be treated as decompression sickness until proved otherwise" or something pretty close to that.



DIVE REPORT

NSW Road Trip - Dec 2021

It really was a fantastic trip. We were lucky with the weather which allowed us 6 days of boat diving out of the ten days. We had some great meals, more pies than we should have (well Peter Campisano and I anyway), a few drinks and a good few laughs.

Thank you Sue Scholey, Peter Campisano, Carole Campisano, Rowan Salger, David Flew and Mike Mosseveld for making it fun filled trip.

If you have not been - go, it is a beautiful part of the world, diving or not.

Now I need some inspiration for next years road trip. Ideas on a postcard please.

- Ian Scholey



LOCAL DIVE REPORTS

Father & Son Dive Bash

Three father-son teams took advantage of the lead up to Xmas to stay down the Peninsula to do four dives with Redboats. Myself and Dylan, Brian and Liam, and Angus and Hamish had two fantastic days in the water. We were joined by Ian Scholey on both days and Chris Porter for the first day. Conditions in the water were not brilliant with a 2-3m swell outside the Heads. However both days we started with a drift dive over sponge gardens alongside Queenscliff, travelling well over 1km on both dives. Ian and Chris, deprived of the opportunity for getting a technical dive, decided to amp up the stakes by adding a massive anchor to their safety stop. The drift dives were followed by a dive on Lonsdale Wall the first day, and Hanging Gardens the next day. It was absolutely wonderful to see our next generation of divers doing such a great job dealing with the conditions and showing such ability and confidence in the water. Hamish managed to find a compass on the Lonsdale Wall dive. Plenty of banter and pies to be had at Baked In Portsea after the dives. A wonderful couple of days in the water.

- Matthijs Smith



LOCAL DIVE REPORTS

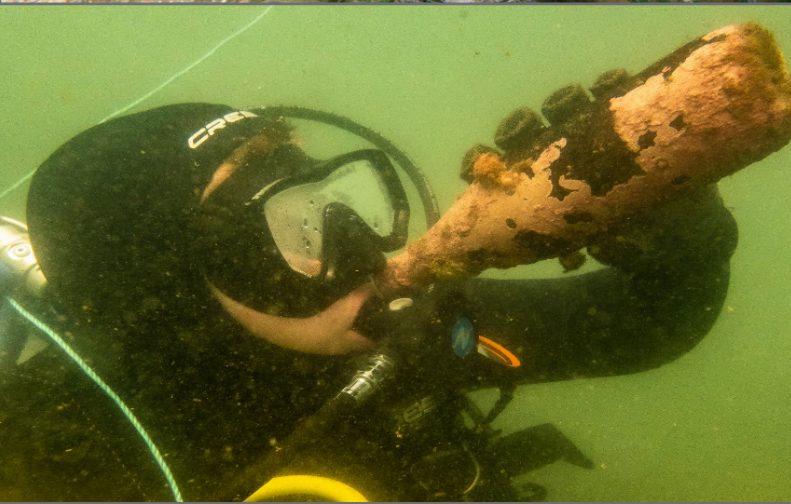
Scallop Dive And Picnic

For the first major Club activity after our serial COVID lockdowns we headed down to Rye for an awesome event organised by Peter Mosse and Stu Cousins. Half the divers were on three boats with the aim of collecting some scallops for a picnic, while the other half did a gentle dive under Rye Pier. Stu Cousins took the name of the event a little too literally and thought a Scallop Dive meant you could only take a single scallop (note to self: use the plural next time). After the dives, we headed over to Rye Centennial Park for a gourmet picnic. While there were not a lot of scallops to be had, Stu and Donna took the catering very seriously, setting up a barrel BBQ to slow cook a couple of chooks and designer sausages, and adorning the table with a couple of sides of his own smoked salmon and Donna's famous seafood sausage rolls. John Lawler brought his guinea pigs but it turned out they were not meant for the BBQ. Sorry JL.

- Matthijs Smith



LOCAL DIVE REPORTS



Altona - November 2021

Not wishing to face any post lockdown crowds down at the peninsula, we decided to explore a new local site which I had been told about by Dive Safari and Altona Snorkel, just south of Millers Road, between Seaholme and Altona. Peter Walters joined Liam and I for the dive as he also wanted to test some new equipment.

We entered about 45min before high tide with a gentle NW wind. Initially, visibility was only 1-1.5 metres but later cleared to 2-3 metres with the tide turning. We dived out past the rocky outcrop and headed south over the sandy bottom until some sea mosses and grasses which emerged just as I was wondering if we were in the right area. This turned into a nice reef at about 4-4.5 metres. We spent most of the 80 min dive around this reef, enjoying the soft corals and other sea life, which included finding a number of nudis and other fish life.

Other than having to surface to retrieve an escaping surface dive flag it was a problem free dive and one we will revisit with better conditions.

- Brian Heatherich

Rye Pier - November 2021

Temp 15°C, Viz ~5m, Surface and in-water conditions excellent.

After a 168 day surface interval, Dylan and I were thrilled to be back in the water joined by Peter Walters, Bobbi O'Riley, Marc Alexander and Dani (non-VSAGer) for a gentle dive off Rye Pier.

First impression was how much growth had happened over the last 6 months. It just looked so lush and beautiful. We spent 20 min getting to the end of the pier before following the markers to Elsa's reef. Some of the structures at Elsa's have certainly packed down, the bicycle is buried in growth and some of the grating has broken down. Several octopi have found nice residence there and Marc and Bobbi found their Tassled Angler fish lurking in her usual spot.

We then moved onto the new artificial reef which is magnificent. A nice 'bar' with barstools, some porcelain thrones which are a great hit with our 8-legged friends and plenty of PVC piping, much of which is occupied. The highlight for me was joining my cephalopod friend for a delicious crab dinner. I let her have the lot.

- Matthijs Smith



LOCAL DIVE REPORTS

Hurricane Wreck and Mt Martha Cliffs

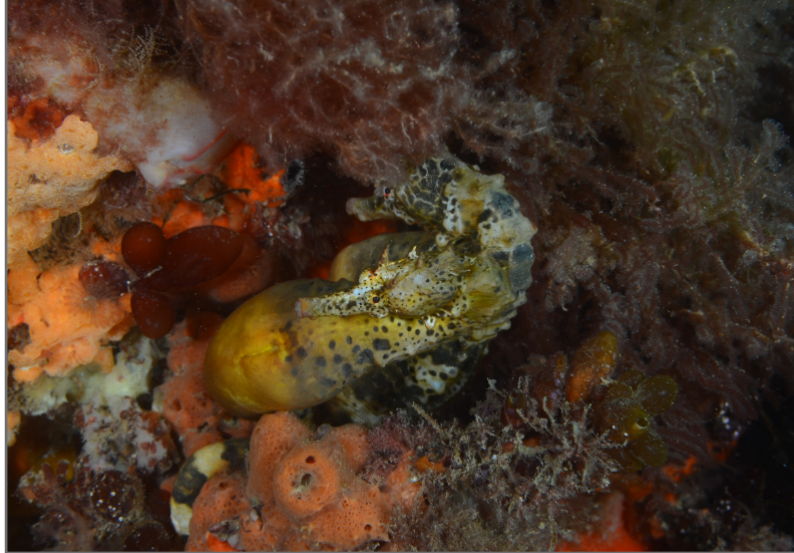
Temp 15°C, viz 10m, Wind SE 5-15k

We launched Toucans from Rye and did a slack water morning dive on the Hurricane. The Hurricane sank in 1869, after hitting Corsair Rock off Point Nepean. The vessel finally sank off Rosebud.

While there is not much that can be recognised as a wreck, it is a brilliantly coloured "artificial reef" dominated by sponges and well inhabited by fish. We saw a good range of fish life and nudis and a sea horse. There was a fisho anchored off the wreck when I got back onboard so I was talking to him about the wreck whilst I waited for Ian to surface. He used to fish the wreck before it was blasted/levelled in the late 60's /early 70's (probably from his dad's boat). He said it was a fantastic spot for catching fish before it was "levelled off". Once Ian was back on board, we headed to the Mt Martha Esplanade Cliffs for a second dive.

While these can be dived from the shore, which involves a difficult scramble down the rock face, it is much easier by boat. The shore line is quite interesting and features cracks and gullies running across the rocky reef out to the sand.

- **Peter Beaumont**



Hurricane Wreck Night Dive

Monday 1 Nov 2021

Water temp: 15c

Wind: SE 10k

Vis: 5 mtrs

Divers: Peter Beaumont, Bobbi O'Riley, Marc Alexander, Ian Scholey

Photos: Peter Beaumont

The forecast conditions and tidal flow were suitable for a Hurricane night dive so Toucans and Sea Eagle set out from Rye Ramp at 8:15pm. Once on site we anchored and started gearing up. With a BOM incoming flow rate of 2 knots at 8:25pm we performed buddy checks and entered the water at 8:45pm.

Once on the bottom we ran a line from the anchor & swam to the stern section then the bow area and had a good look around. We saw the usual leather jackets, ornate cow fish, blue rings a few rays, seahorses etc tucked away in sections of the wreck. After an 1hr to 1hr 20 minutes we were back onboard stowed the gear and back at the ramp by approximately 10:20pm. Overall it was a very enjoyable dive.

- **Peter Beaumont**

PHOTO COMPETITION

Winner

October - 2021



Peter Mosse - Look inside - San Remo, Phillip Island, Victoria.

PHOTO COMPETITION

Runners up
October - 2021



Marc Alexander - Hey BRO! - Rye Pier



Peter Mosse - A little bit shy - Cowes Jetty Phillip Island

PHOTO COMPETITION

Winner

November - 2021

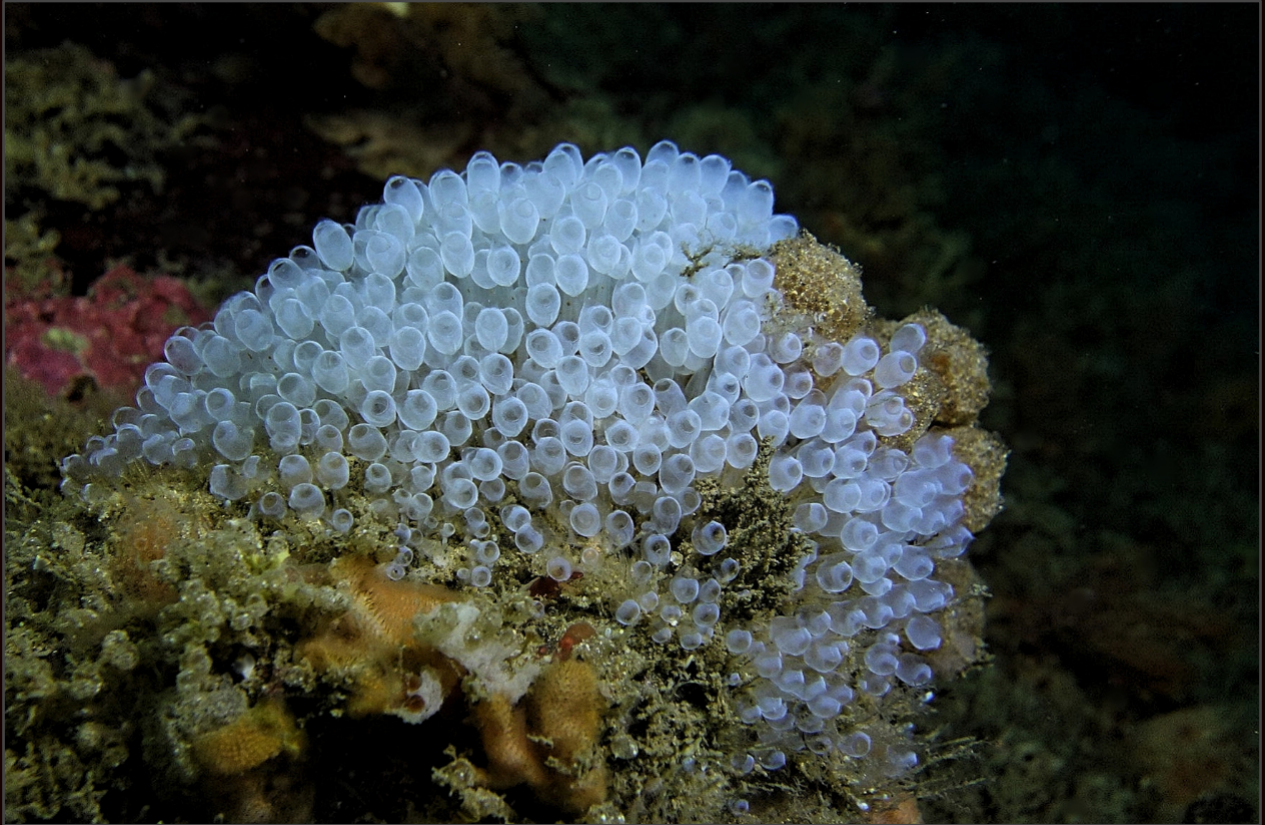


Matthijs Smith - Octopus super power - Elsa's Reef 2 - Rye

PHOTO COMPETITION

Runners up

November - 2021



Peter Mosse - Wine Anyone - Pinnacles, Phillip Island, Victoria



Marc Alexander - Pipe dreams - Elsa's Reef 2 - Rye



Club Equipment

As part of VSAG's commitment to promoting safe diving, the Club owns several pieces of dive equipment that are available for loan to Club Members.

Over the last year, all of this equipment has been located, logged, registered, and serviced. It is now ready for use by VSAG Club Members.

The most common pieces of Club equipment used by Club Members are the Emergency Oxygen Administration and First Aid kits. These are typically provided on long-term loan to active Club boat owners and permanently located on their boats for the safety of Club Members.

Other equipment available for short-term loan includes:

- 2.8 litre pony bottles including 1st/2nd stage regs; redundant gas for deep or wreck diving
- Ambient carbon monoxide (CO) meter; for monitoring member's compressors.
- Automated External Defibrillator: with plans to increase the number of units over time
- Sand Launching Ropes

In addition, the Club owns a number of standard aluminum dive cylinders and a few smaller sized cylinders.

A full list of equipment available for loan by VSAG Club Members, and instructions on how to access this equipment, is available at the VSAG site: <https://www.revolutionise.com.au/vsag/vsag-equipment/>

For Club Members to access this equipment, the first point of contact is the Equipment Officer. The current Club Equipment Officer is Brian Heatherich. The general email address to enquire about accessing of equipment is equipment@vsag.org.au.

The Equipment Officer will know the current location of pieces of equipment and can assist with arranging access. It is advised to make arrangements as far in advance as possible to ensure availability and sufficient time to collect the equipment.

For any further questions or requests, please contact Brian Heatherich.

- Brian Heatherich

Emergency Contact Information

Anywhere on Victorian Waters, your first response should always be to call

000

or call the Water Police on 1800 135 729

In the event you cannot place a call, use

VHF Channel 16

and follow the Radio Emergency Message Protocols shown below.

If all of the above fail, activate your

EPIRB

Radio Emergency Message Protocols

Ensure all vessel passengers are familiar with the operation of a VHF radio and the following process for placing a Mayday or Pan Pan call

Speak slowly and clearly

Mayday call

Vessel or an occupant is in grave and imminent danger and requires immediate assistance

Distress call

Mayday, Mayday, Mayday

this is

"Name of your vessel", "your call sign" x 3

Distress message after call has been acknowledged

Mayday

"Name of your vessel", "your call sign"

Vessel position (GPS, bearing, what3words)

Nature of distress and assistance required

Other useful information such as number of persons on board, vessel description, life-rafts, EPIRB, etc.

Pan Pan call

An urgent situation exists but there is no imminent danger

Urgency call

Pan Pan, Pan Pan, Pan Pan

All Stations x 3 (or *"specific station"* x 3)

"Name of your vessel", "your call sign" x 3

Urgency message after call has been acknowledged

Pan Pan

"Name of your vessel", "your call sign"

Vessel position (GPS, bearing, what3words)

Nature of distress and assistance required

Other useful information such as number of persons on board, vessel description, life-rafts, EPIRB, etc.

VSAG Committee 2021-2022

President - Matthijs Smith

president@vsag.org.au

Vice-President - Walter Medenbach

vicepresident@vsag.org

Treasurer - Angus Stuart-Adams

treasurer@vsag.org.au

Secretary - Stuart Cousins

secretary@vsag.org.au

New Members Coordinator - Ian Scholey

ischoley@me.com

Safety Coordinators - Stuart Cousins & Matthijs Smith

matthijs.smith.1984@gmail.com

Travel Coordinator - Ian Scholey

ischoley@me.com

Merchandise Coordinator - Jeremy van der Beek

jeremy.vanderbeek@eview.com.au

RS Coordinators - Brian Heatherich & Walter Medenbach

brian.heatherich@outlook.com

IT Coordinators - Angus Stuart Adams & Walter Medenbach

waltbach@gmail.com

Equipment Coordinator - Brian Heatherich

brian.heatherich@outlook.com

SDSV Representative - Peter Galvin

galvo350@gmail.com

Club Awards & Points - Arthur Kokkinos

arthurkokkino1718@gmail.com

Photo Competition - Ian Scholey

photos@vsag.org.au

Chief Archivist - Ian Scholey

Ischoley@me.com

Fathoms Editors - Peter Walters & Peter Mosse

editor@vsag.org.au

... Odds are you won't need a custom-made suit to get down to because Parkway suits come in 26 different body-to-wear sizes. Tall, short, with, stocky, or otherwise, you won't have to spend even one penny to get a perfect fit.

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Parkway's 1973 catalog has colorful photos of 55 suits and specs for over 300 styles, including wetsuits, skinsuits, and more. To get it send \$1.00 to Parkway Catalog, Dept. SDT, 500 Fifth Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10016.

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