

# Fathoms

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

**WINTER 2023**



*The Diver and The Devil-Fish*

*Vale – Luke English*

*Six Months of Photo Competitions*

*A Double Book-review Feature*

*Mass Sea Urchin Spawning*



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# VSAG AGM

## Presidents Year in Review

by *Angus Stuart-Adams*

A decade ago, when I embarked on my journey with the Victorian Sub Aqua Group (VSAG), my aspiration was to refine my diving skills. Like countless others I've met on this journey, I had participated in the programs offered by retail shops, yet my thirst for more remained unquenched. In VSAG, I unearthed a community that diverged from any shop-based group I'd known before. Our shared commitment to "Safety in Diving" pulsates through the veins of our club, not to dismiss the pivotal role that shops play – indeed, my diving credentials owe a debt to them.

But today, I find myself surrounded by a club of divers who are passionate about diving and wanting to share their knowledge. Those days when I humbly held open a cray bag for a senior club member have evolved into times when captaining my boat, mentoring new members and imparting skills learnt and developed. And, evermore, that same senior member continues to impart more invaluable insights. But my education isn't tethered to one source, or shop, or diving course; it's the diversity of people, skills, and abilities within our club that fuels VSAG's excellence.

I stand honoured to be the President of VSAG for the term 2022/2023. It brings me pleasure to present this report, encapsulating our diving club's escapades during my tenure. The past year has been characterised by our dedication to marine conservation, an invigorated focus on safety training, and an enriched SCUBA experience for all members. This report offers a glimpse into our triumphs, hurdles, and the road ahead for VSAG.



Championing Conservation and Community:

### 1. Marine Conservation Initiatives:

- We joined forces with local environmental champions for the Great Victorian Fish Count and the Sea Slug Sensus in Port Phillip Bay.
- Collaborations with marine biologists and researchers supporting projects such as "Spider Crabs of Port Phillip Bay" and the "Shark Egg Hunt," safeguarding our marine ecosystem and habitats.



### 2. Elevated Safety and Training:

- An overhaul of our safety protocols included dedicated equipment specialist days and comprehensive first aid training with a focus on emergency equipment use in diving scenarios.
- Empowered by our boat-owning members, we continue to support our club members that have completed boat licenses, ensuring readiness for emergencies and fostering boating skills.

### 3. Voyages into Discovery:

- Weekly, mid-weekly diving events persisted through frustratingly difficult weather conditions.
- Notable expeditions spanned Lord Howe Island, The Great Barrier Reef, Coral Sea, Hogan Island, Arch Rock, The Pinnacles, Phillip Island, and the Port Phillip Bay Ships Graveyard.
- A novel escapade, in-fact a first for the Club, being a "Four-wheel driving & underground creek with snorkels" event buoyed by enthusiastic members, showcased our daring spirit.

# Presidents Year in Review

## 4. Fostering Community Ties:

- Our commitment to knowledge-sharing and camaraderie was exemplified through scuba diving social functions, courses, and monthly meetings that included our photo competition which fostered stiff competition for photographic brilliance amongst our Club members.
- Our continued involvement with the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) ensured our compliance to policy enhancements for sustainable fishing along the Victorian coastline.

## 5. Plans for 2023/24

2024 heralds the 70th anniversary of VSAG – an occasion warranting a landmark celebration, a testament to our club.

Plans are afoot for another fabulous Christmas party planned at the Beaumaris Motor Yacht Squadron this year. Don't forget to book.

Our overseas escapades continue to balloon, with expeditions to Scapa Flow, the Great Detached Reef, Palau, and Christmas Island already full and some with wait lists.



In the coming season against a backdrop of still and warmer waters, should the weather gods oblige our expectations are high for a wave of events and diving adventures.

Finally, I am immensely proud of the Club, our community and collaboration. To the passionate individuals, steadfast partners of our members, and both former committee members who've fuelled our achievements, my profound gratitude and thanks.





## Vale – Luke English

by *Matthijs Smith*

It is with incredible sadness that we learned of the recent passing of Redboats founder and operator, Luke English. His contribution to Melbourne's dive community, both as a dive charter operator and as an individual, is inestimable. He had a huge and massively positive impact on recreational diving in Melbourne and his loss will be felt for many years to come.

Luke and Redboats have been part my entire Melbourne diving life. Dylan and I started diving on liveboards on the Great Barrier Reef. While we logged many dives on the GBR, and much to Dylan's disappointment, this was not financially sustainable. So, we eventually bought our own kit and got ourselves ready to start diving Melbourne's more temperate waters.

The first boat dive we did in Melbourne was at Pope's Eye off Redboats with Luke as captain. It was a memorable experience. As anyone who dealt with Luke knew, he had the ability to tear strips off people with the intensity and frequency of a professional back waxer. On this particular tour, Luke's dial was set at 11. We were subjected to a fairly brutal dressing down that included a public dissection of our many shortcomings as divers accompanied by some fairly blunt

recommendations. We were not alone that day. On the boat was also a group of OW students doing their first ocean boat dive. Luke recommended that the instructor fail them all. This was a very different from our previous dive boat experiences with Mike Ball.

However, with more than a little fear and intrepidation, we returned with thicker skins, thicker wetsuits and a laser focus to try not to stuff up too much. While this was a fairly abrupt introduction to Luke, I think it will be familiar to many. However, we found the more we dived with Redboats, the more we got to know Luke and realise what a good and caring person he was. So, while the delivery could have done with a bit of refinement, he actually, genuinely cared about the people around him a lot.

As we got more experience with diving in Victoria, we also started to appreciate just how challenging and stressful running Redboats must have been. Every 2 hours, Luke had to deal with up to 20 new divers of mixed experience and competence, and stop them from doing something stupid or dangerous. He was absolutely committed to delivering the best dive experience he could, given the divers he had on the boat and the conditions in and on the water. And if that involved the double barrelled delivery of some brutally direct messages, so be it. I believe that Luke ran one of the best and tightest dive charter boats and that has made me recognise shortcomings of many other dive boats that I have been on.

## Vale – Luke English



Luke had immense respect for VSAG. He was an incredible supporter of the Club in many ways, and I felt he held VSAG divers in especially high regard. I remember him saying “The shit you guys get up to is crazy. It blows my mind”. He seemed to have a lot of confidence that people who dived off small, private boats probably would be OK on a purpose built, crewed, dive charter boat. He also supported the Club with night dives and the parent-kids event we held before Christmas in 2021.

The caring side of Luke really came through as we go to know him. I remember having a very long conversation with him at the Redboats Dive Lodge one evening over a few beers when he found out about our special needs son, Max, and he wanted to know everything about him and his life. From then on, every time I saw Luke he would ask about Max, how he was going, what he was up to. And it was genuine interest. He continually offered to take Max out on the boat.



Luke absolutely loved kids. I think kids brought out the kid in Luke. Once there were kids on the boat, Luke was looking for ways to give them great experiences—giving them a go at driving the boat or conducting experiments underwater for their school projects. He really transformed once kids were around.

Equally, if anyone on the boat had seasickness, a scare from an incident, or had something going wrong, Luke was always there. I saw Luke looking after people who were cold, who had ended up in an uncontrolled feet first ascent from their dry suit, experience some kind of kit failure (both user and gear induced), crying with seasickness. When this happened, Luke became Mother Teresa—a bad visual I know.

Luke was also the first person to put up his hand if there was someone in distress on the water, offering his boat to help out in a situation at the drop of a hat. This even stretched to rescuing a possum that had somehow got itself stranded on a buoy. If Luke could help with his boat, he would.

Not to forget Luke’s innate sense of fun. He would post videos of himself doing karaoke on the empty dive boat while everyone was underwater. “The shit I get up to when you are down there, you don’t want to know”. I think one of the best was on one of the night dives, while we were all down, he radioed the Spirit of Tasmania and asked them to switch on all their lights. And they did! He was fist pumping like crazy when we got back on board.

The incredible outpourings that came out following his passing, show that these sides of Luke touched many, many of people. He was someone who you ended up talking to about all sorts of things—sometimes very deep and personal things. The Luke I met on that first Melbourne boat dive was not the guy I knew when he sadly recently left us.

I believe that the times of Luke and Redboats will be remembered as one of the Golden Eras of diving in Melbourne. He really opened up diving in the Bay and out the Heads for recreational and technical diving by providing a first rate operation that ran regular charters and tried to deliver the best experience available to the people on his boat that day. I know that many of my best diving memories are thanks to Luke. I will also miss catching up and spending time with him as a friend and companion.



# DIVE TRIP REPORT

## Diving the Lady Cheryl

by *Peter Mosse*

Andrew McKernan's email offering some dives in the southern end of the Bay arrived shortly after I had heard from Brian Heatherich about the Lady Cheryl. She had never been on my radar of dive sites. Sure, I knew where she was located, and had passed the site several times when transiting the heads. But Brian's description made me change my thoughts, so I quickly notified Andrew that I wished to dive. The site is a 27 m shipwrecked trawler that sunk off Point Nepean on 24 March 2012, spilling about 30,000 litres of diesel fuel. The master and four of the five crew members recorded blood alcohol readings in excess of 0.05 in breach of the trawler owner's zero tolerance policy. All crew were rescued by Port Phillip Sea Pilots.

I joined "hopalong" Andrew and his wife Tanya, along with Arthur and Tara, aboard Andrew's new Bar Crusher. Yes, it is so new, the life jackets were still in wrappers!

We had planned two dives inside the Bay, but as chance had it, we chose to dive during a period of spring tides. The tide was far too strong and the water too dirty for our first proposed dive at Rob's Reef. I was looking forward to this dive after having read John Lawler's "My Favorite Dive Site" in a previous Fathoms article. We discussed other options, but decided to just do one slack water dive on the Lady Cheryl.

The wonderful things about the Lady Cheryl are the shallow depth, about 14 m maximum, and the astonishing invertebrate growth covering every square centimeter of the hull outside, and most of the inside as well. But the other thing to be aware of, she sits in relatively shallow water, just inside Point Nepean, exposed to swell and tidal current.

We anchored while the tide was still flowing strongly and gradually watched the water boils subside. We finally entered with a gentle current still heading out of the Bay. The swell had picked up a little and surfers were starting to arrive at nearby Corsair Rock. In contrast to the Queenscliff side of the Bay, the water looked quite clear.

With a short slack water, Andrew in the boat drifted slowly over the wreck as the tidal flow changed direction. He was able to see Arthur clearly below the boat as he passed over head.

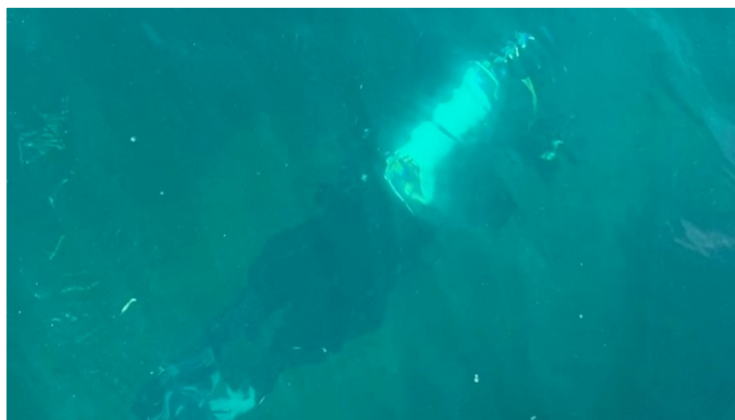
The wreck seems to be located across the main tidal flow and provides a substantial "lee" area where divers can easily dive out of the worst of the current, but the surge still moves you around considerably. By the time we peeked around the bow to return to the anchor, the current was hurtling along, making for an exhilarating safety stop.

The wreck is liberally adorned with the same colonial ascidians that give the Hanging Gardens their name. But in amongst these are all the highly coloured sponges that are prevalent along the Lonsdale and Nepean Walls, along with graceful fronds of kelp, all swaying in the surge and current.

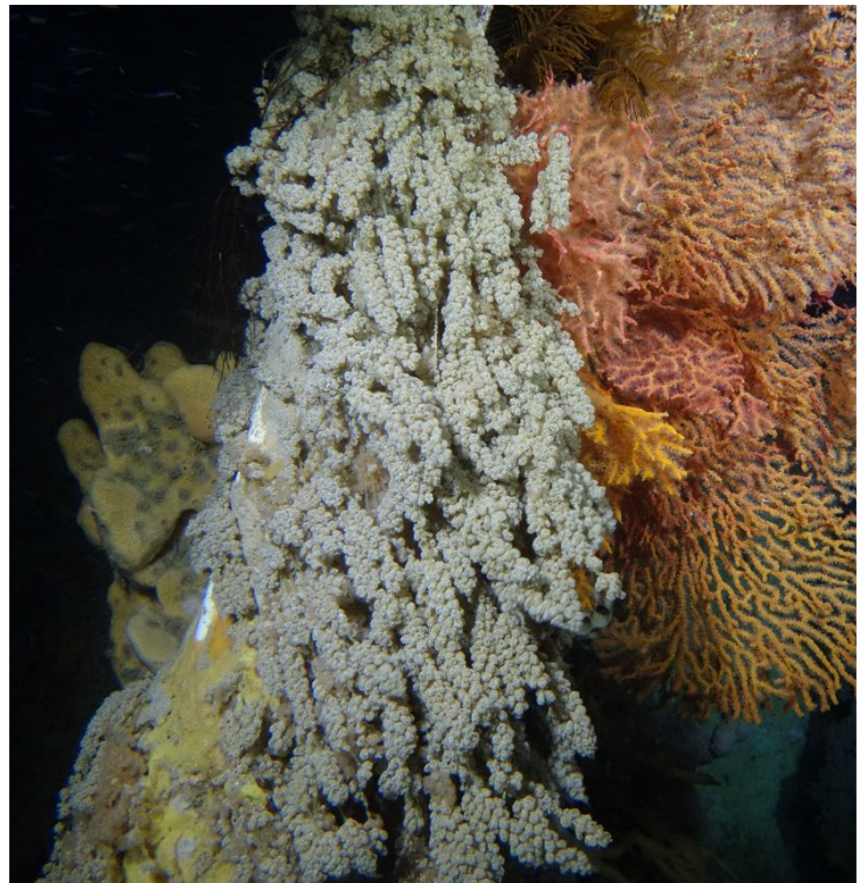
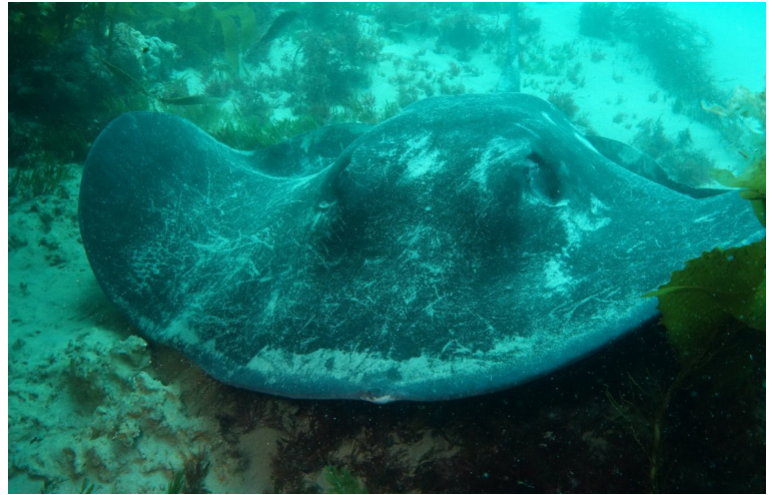
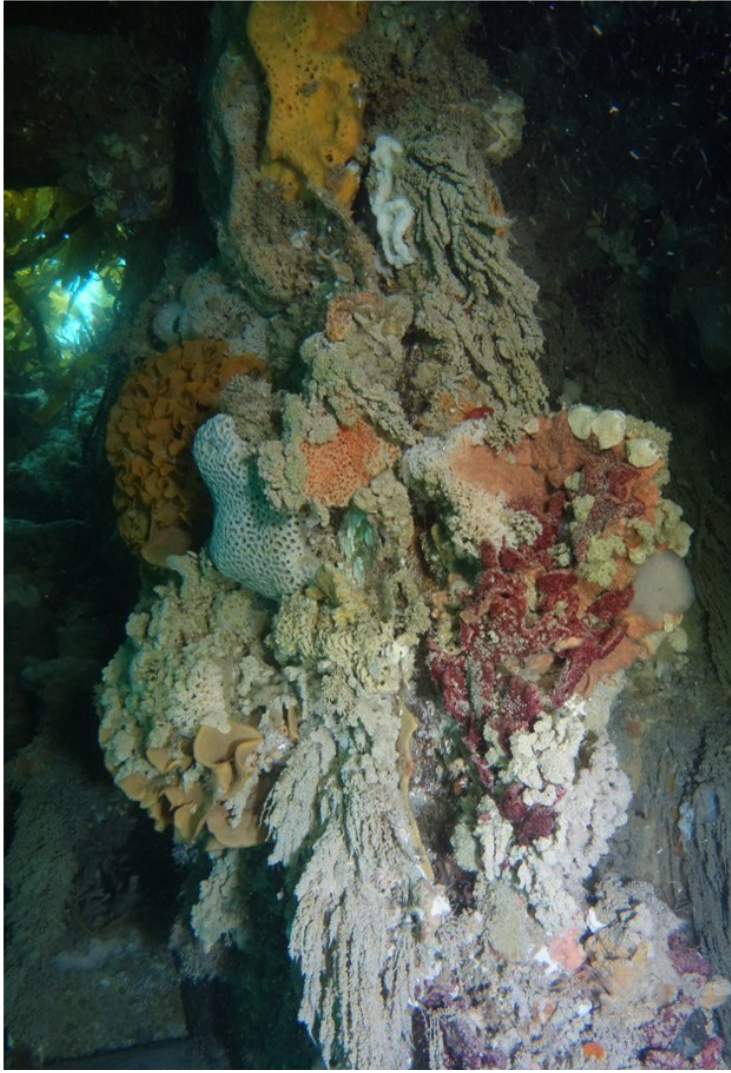
There are also plenty of gorgonian fans in the slightly darkened interior parts of the wreck. While penetrating deep inside is quite tempting, it needs to be balanced against the likely damage to the encrusting life, so go lightly if you do. But if you need to go, it is possible to find the Lady Cheryl's "Head".

And there are plenty of decent sized fish as well, but the scenery on the wreck will take most divers breaths away.

Thanks for a great day out, Andrew. I think we all learned a thing or two about diving the fair Lady. If you get the chance, take Andrew up on his offer sometime, but be prepared for some fun current and surge!



# Diving the Lady Cheryl





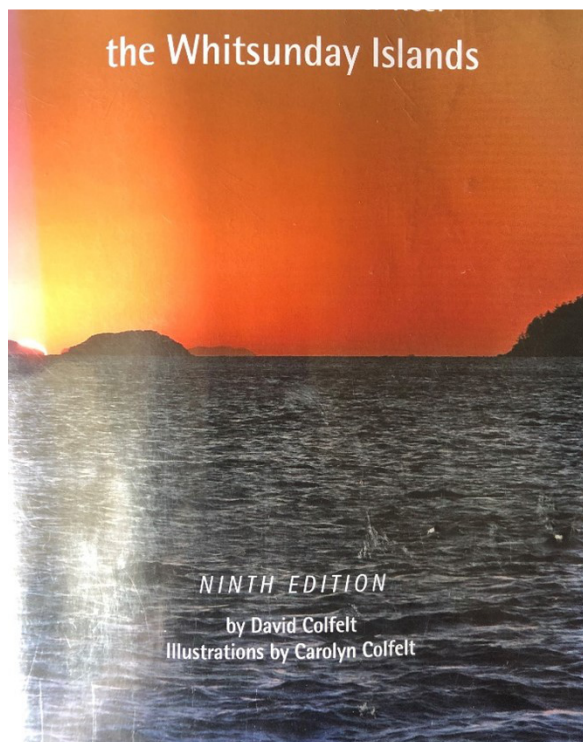
# BOOK REVIEW

by *Arthur Kokkinos*

## 100 Magic Miles of the Great Barrier Reef - the Whitsunday Islands

- written by **David Colfelt**

"In the water, do unto others as you would have them do unto you - not before they do it unto you." Is a quote from this book that grabbed my attention and probably best describes what this book is all about. 100 magic miles of the Great Barrier Reef the Whitsunday Islands by David Colfelt was first published in 1985 and has since had 9 editions ending in 2010. The Whitsunday Islands are a natural wonder and I have been very lucky to have been there myself but unfortunately

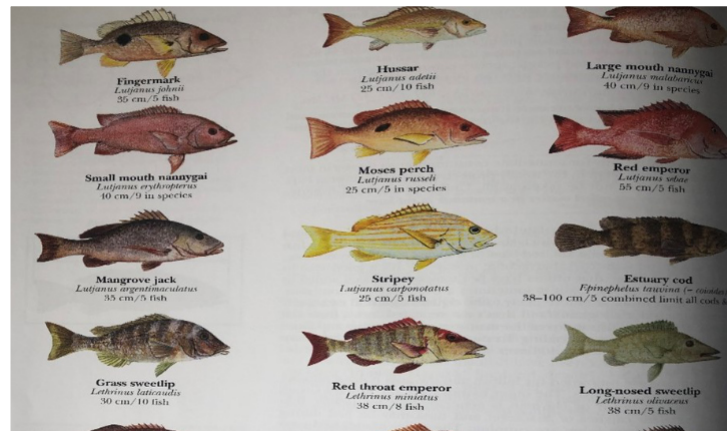


unlucky to have never dived in this mesmerizing location. The topography and natural surroundings enveloping this cluster of islands is without a doubt one of the most beautiful scenic locations that I have ever visited. I can only imagine how wonderful it would be under the water.

The book has 15 major topics that cover every angle of the Whitsundays, from Island Resorts, tips for Tropical Holidays, Diving and Snorkelling in the Whitsundays, Boating in the Whitsundays, Visiting the Outer Reefs, Fishing in the Whitsundays, Island Camping and Kayaking in the Whitsundays, Walking in the Whitsundays, Anchorages in the Whitsundays and an index of Anchorages and Placenames.

Every topic was comprehensively researched making this book a valuable source of reference in learning everything you need to know about the Whitsunday

Islands. The Diving and Snorkelling section of the book is quite impressive. It provides a plethora of information of where to dive, underwater topography, diving etiquette, underwater animal species (sharks to nasty jellyfishes). The best diving sites in the Whitsundays section is definitely my favourite part of this book. The section covers 32 diving sites with information regarding visibility, diving depth, best time to dive, diving terrain and a description of what to see and expect.



Some of the common Whitsunday reef fin fish with size and /or bag limits.

The section on Anchorages is also impressive and very well researched. The map illustrations and the general legend is quite comprehensive and easy to read and understand. For VSAG boat owners, you will find the map of location moorings in the central Whitsunday Area informative and interesting. The book also has a number of hydrographic maps that cover the whole Whitsunday Islands.



Anchorage location at Bauer Bay, South Molle Island, looking north to Mid Molle and North Molle Islands

This outstanding book covers every fundamental angle of the Whitsundays and if you are ever planning to visit or dive in this area this book is without a doubt your complete guide to the Whitsundays. I highly recommend this book to all road trip diving enthusiasts who plan to visit this wonderful location.

My book review rating for this book is 10/10.

Remember, If you're not diving, dive into a dive book!!!

Until next time,

Arthur Kokkinos

# DIVE TRIP REPORT

## Tassie Diving February 2023

by *Carole Campisano*

I decided that it had been a few years and just too long since we had been down to Tassie. It's a beautiful state. So rugged and raw. It was time for another visit.

I rang Karen from Eaglehawk Neck Dive Centre and she said they had room at the hostel and on the boat in late February. Most importantly, she said, you need to secure a spot on the Spirit of Tasmania, if you want to bring your car. That was really no problem. We wanted to stay at the dive centre for at least one week and possibly seven more days after, to explore different areas of Tasmania.

Looking on the 'Spirit's' website, I managed to find very reasonable fares. Day sailing from Geelong @ \$419 - car + 2 adults. Return- Day sailing @ \$489. Using a car that's a standard size, i.e. vehicle under 2.1m high and 5.06m in length, is a bonus, compared to a 4 WD, that needs to be booked in a long way ahead and more expensive as well.



*Mick on the dive boat.*

We headed down to Eaglehawk Neck the following morning after staying overnight in Devonport. It took about half a day by car. If flying into Hobart and you hire a car, it's about an hour's drive south.

Eaglehawk Neck Dive Centre is co-owned by Mick Baron and Karen Gowlett - Holmes. Both have 40 year's experience diving in the area and are highly qualified in their fields. They have a wealth of knowledge in the marine world that they're only too happy to share. They are well stocked with hire gear and warm 7 mm wetsuits with plenty of tanks and weight belts if you don't want to bring them over on the ferry. There is on site accommodation at the Diver's Lodge which is inexpensive but having the use of a kitchen where you can make your own meals is fantastic. There's more up-market accommodation around the area like the Lufra Hotel, if you prefer.

I do like staying on site, it's so convenient for so many reasons. Whether it's the hot shower and access to a good late lunch from the kitchen or feeding the chickens and paddymelon wallabies late in the afternoon.

We managed ten dives over the week. Dives often included beautiful sea dragons, which are around 30-40 cm, larger and more colourful than the mainland ones. I became the 'expert' spotter for many of the visiting divers from interstate and overseas.



*Sea dragons were plentiful.*

Fock Rock is an interesting dive. Follow the instructions from the Skipper (Mick) and you'll find arches and tunnels that are full of fish and spectacular growth on the rocks.

The sea caves here are the largest in Australia. The largest is called Cathedral Cave of which Skull Cave is amazing. A good torch is essential to see the entire cavern and all the creatures great and small- colourful nudibranchs to crayfish.

There's usually an opportunity to dive with the seals and this is a nice easy one for all levels of divers.

There were a couple of dives we couldn't do as there weren't enough experienced divers to fill the boat. We've done them on previous trips and they are awesome. The wreck of the SS Nord is 42 m deep and is reasonably intact. Plenty of fish have made the wreck their home, especially the Butterfly Perch.

Another dive that requires experience is the 'Sisters', a gorgeous sponge garden with sea whips, soft corals and huge schools of fish.

When we weren't diving there are numerous other activities to amuse us. The Garlic Festival at Koonya was a first for us. Huge organically grown garlic was displayed with some serious judging. I got into trouble for trying to talk to the judge, he had his 'game face' on, no time for chit chat. Great live music and all sorts of food vans and home-made crafts for sale.

Port Arthur is definitely worth a visit. Make sure you allow a full day to absorb all the history or do the night tour for a different perspective.

## Tassie Diving February 2023



To fill in other hours you can drive down to the Remarkable Cave, and close by Tasman's Arch and Devil's Kitchen. Then do the Waterfall Bay walk to view the dive sites you've done from a different viewpoint. This is just a few of the many attractions to keep you busy but don't forget to fill your belly with local oysters from Blue Lagoon Oysters, located between Dunalley and Boomer Bay. Delicious!

We headed off to the north coast to spend some time near Devonport for the return trip on the ferry. I did a search on google maps for the quickest route to Ulverstone. The road was good but I started to wonder why the road started to narrow, and the shoulders

seemed to fall away, making it impossible to pull the car over. The road was becoming windy, and I became a little worried. I reviewed my intentions again on my iPad and soon realised I had made a huge mistake thinking this route was similar to the freeway between Launceston and Hobart, ooops. We were driving a 1995 Ford station wagon, so a little concerned, but the car handled the hills and many hair pin bends well. Crossing the Central Highlands of Tasmania is a gorgeous drive. The Great Lakes are unbelievably huge were the most exhilarating blue colour. The mountains are rugged, raw and stunningly beautiful. Definitely worth doing, but possibly in a later model car next time!





# The Diver & The Devil-Fish by Des Williams

The Victorian era was a time of exaggerated storytelling when it came to adventurers of the deep sea diver, who daily worked underwater, a medium little understood by the general public of that era. Readers of the 19th century were presented with far-fetched, scary stories and adventures which must have been terrifying to read.

But, what I find interesting, is that small boys were generally the target of such 'ripping yarns' and yes, parents and grandparents gave their small children copies of such popular publications as "Chatterbox", "Stirring Stories for Boys", "Boys Own" magazine and the "True Yarns of Diving Heroes" series in "Chums" magazine, and were probably quite unconcerned about the fictional content. Maybe they saw such stories as character building entertainment, despite the yarns being enough to scare the short pants and school cap off small Victorian boys!

The adventures of deep-sea divers became a favourite subject of 19th century fiction writers, who never let the truth get in the way of a good read. Very few people knew much about the sea, it was an unexplored area of the planet, which was only just being opened up by helmet-divers and therefore ripe for a bit of exaggeration. Authors came up with stories of sea monsters, ghost-possessed ships, remote tropical islands and buried treasures. But, the most common subject of terror was the Devil-fish, brilliant bed-time reading for small children! Beware the devil-fish!

These days, we know the devil-fish as an octopus or squid, but the "devil-fish" referred to in 19th century yarns was always a colossal, slippery, revolting, and aggressive killer, who lurked in dark caves and guarded sunken shipwrecks, lying in wait for the working diver. Not just your normal calamari of today.

Most publications included a pictorial engraving of these hideous monsters and their sneaky attacks, to add to the gripping text. No wonder, even today, the average citizen is still intimidated by the deep sea and what lies in wait out below. There were even stories of the gigantic Kraken, a squid so colossal it could grip an entire sailing ship and eat its crew alive. Yikes ..... too much for a small boys!

My research has also turned up devil-fish stories by genuine deep-sea divers, given in interviews to the press of the 19th century. What could be more convincing than a story of an encounter with the devil-fish given word for word by a well-known deep sea diver himself? Today, most of these yarns do make unbelievable fictional reading to modern divers who have had years of experience working in the sea.



*"The diver emerged from the water in the loathsome embrace of the great devil-fish"*

Well-known 19th century Victorian diver Isaac Smale, was reported in contemporary press as having no less than two frightening encounters with the devil-fish. His first was in 1879 when he was seized by an octopus at Port Fairy, whilst working on the construction of a wharf.

This particular story, which included graphic quotes by Smale of his lucky escape, was syndicated throughout most Australian newspapers and even made it to the British press.

In 1881 Smale was working with a small team of divers, including diver Inkster, blasting away the hazardous Lightning Rocks outside 'The Rip' at Port Phillip Heads, when he was attacked again! A contemporary illustration certainly shows a formidable opponent, but the divers did manage to ward the creature off in time, to get the story to a local news reporter.



*Another devil-fish attack*

But, the next account of an attack on a 19th century diver REALLY takes the prize for the most exaggerated tale. In 1893, diver Wagner from South Australia claimed he was attacked by a crayfish! Today, most sport divers would be delighted by such an experience! We can only assume that the crayfish startled Wagner, who had probably read too many fiction novels himself as a boy and was thus a good target for a surprise "attack." From the Sydney Evening News of 2nd of March 1893:

*"Adelaide – Wednesday. A diver named Wagner had an exciting adventure with a crayfish at Victor Harbour. When below, a crayfish attacked him and in beating it off, he knocked heavily against a huge rock which stunned him. He floated unconscious to the surface and was picked up just in time by a native."*

**Believe it or not!**



*Smale and Inkster in action.*



*Diver Smale at Port Fairy.*

# SEALIFE

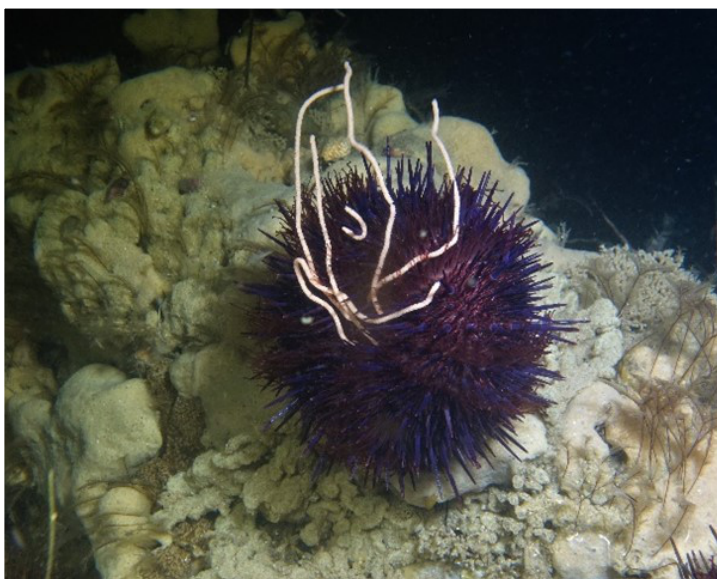
## Mass Sea Urchin Spawning

by *Peter Mosse*

'It was a hot summers night and my feet were burning' (Apologies to Meatloaf). The tide at San Remo was late enough for it to be properly dark with a crescent moon high in the sky. Perfect night for a night dive.

I hadn't done a night dive for years. The problem with it being dark was it was very difficult to detect the end of the tide. Eventually it looked like the tide had slowed enough. There was still a bit of current as we descended along the leading arm of the jetty.

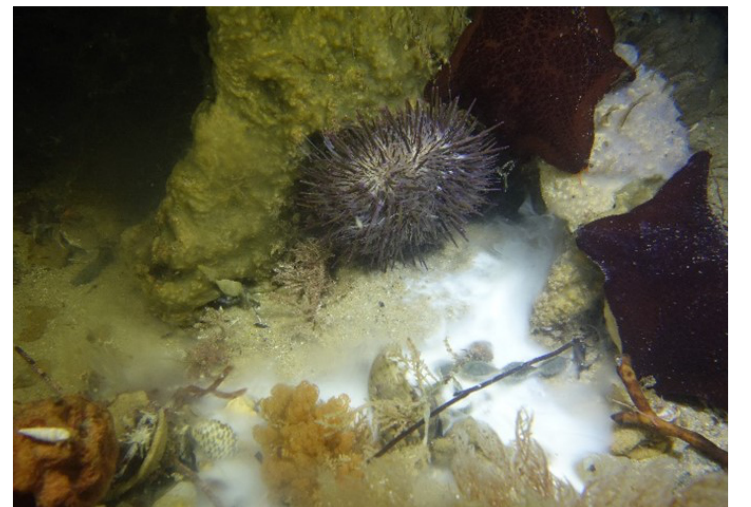
On the way out, we started to notice some spaghetti like strands in the water. At first I thought it was from a fish having defecated but it didn't look right. Then we started to notice these strands interwoven in the spines of some sea urchins. Some slightly pinkish, some appeared a little yellow.



Then we noticed other urchins with streams of white "powdery" material oozing out of them or clouds of white in the water near them. Always one or the other.



It had to be eggs and sperm being released. Some of the "milt" was pooled in large amounts just on the bottom next to the urchin. Perhaps waiting for a current to suspend it or perhaps it just wouldn't contribute to a new generation?



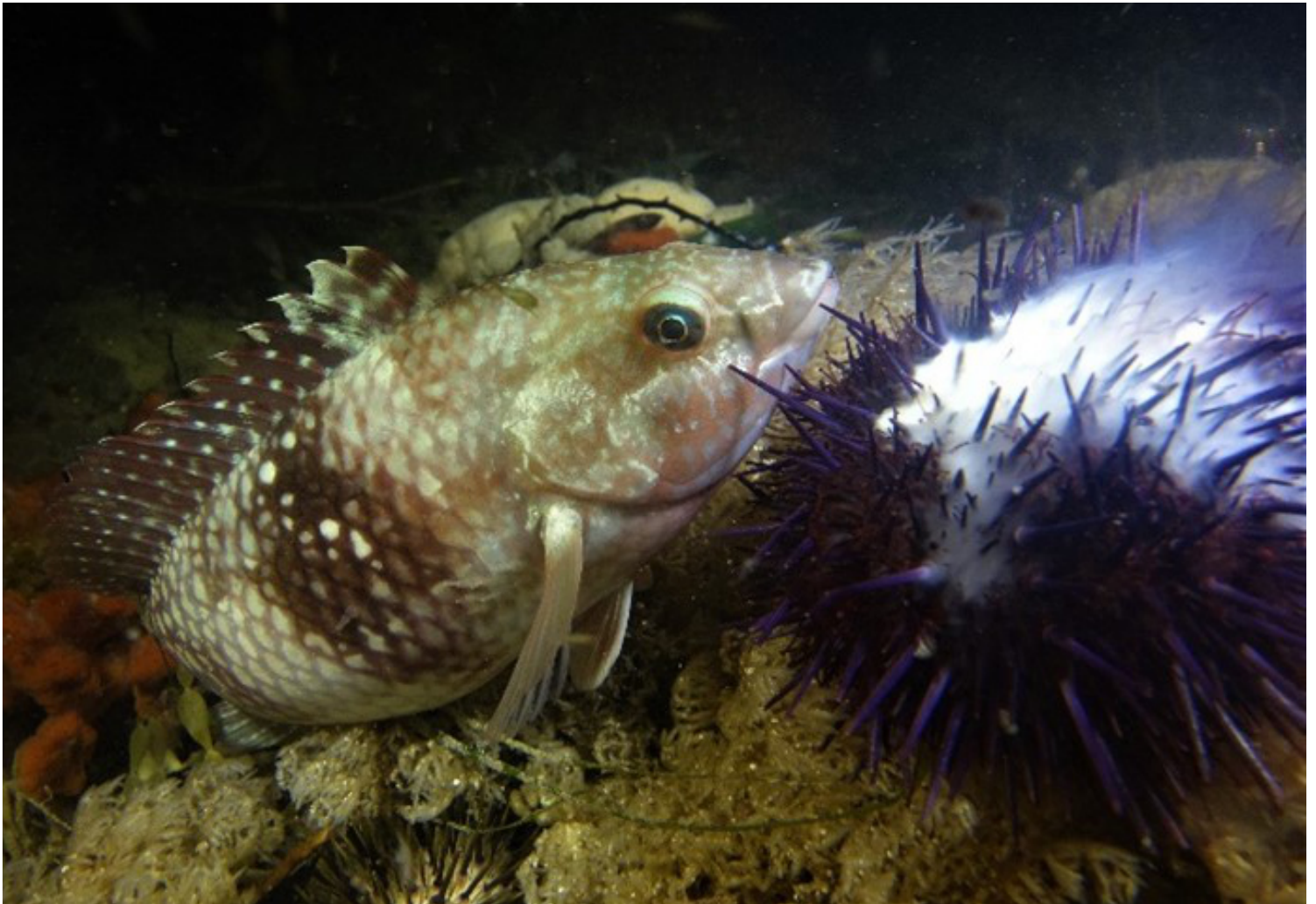
As the dive continued more and more "urchins" were taking part in the mass spawning.

## Mass Sea Urchin Spawning cont.

I have only done a little research, but it does appear that sea urchins do have a mass spawning event, but unlike corals, its timing isn't quite as predictable. We were lucky, very lucky. And I suspect not too many divers have seen this event.

And of course as with most night dives, some other neat creatures appear.

What is the chance of seeing the spawning event again? Pretty low I think.





# BOOK REVIEW

by *Andrew McKernan*

## Goldfinder

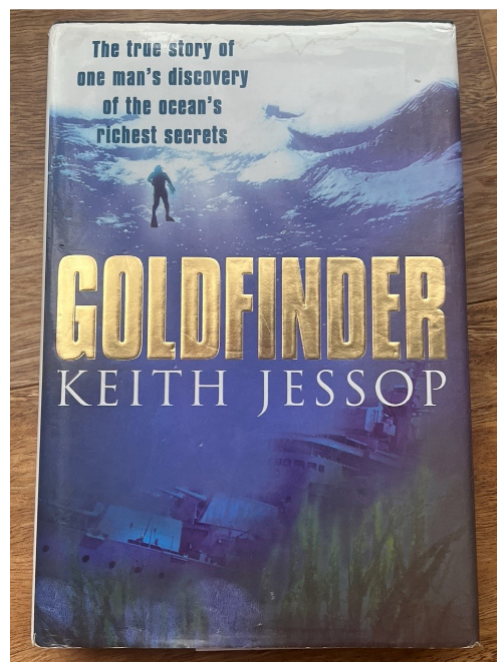
- written by **Keith Jessop**

As a scuba diver, I found Keith Jessop's *Goldfinder* to be an exhilarating and informative read. This book is not just for the diving community, but a must-read for anyone who loves a good adventure story. This is not a pompous blow-hard autobiography, rather an honest account of a lifetime of learning from mistakes in some extremely dangerous environments and for the most part: 'getting away with it'.

Jessop takes us from the 1950s diving in icy waters wearing a woollen jumper and home made dive equipment through to advanced saturation diving in the arctic ocean. The book tells the story of Jessop's search for many wrecks off the coast of Cornwall and in hazardous waters around Scarpa Flow. This is interspersed with other diving adventures on oil rigs around the world that were just his day job to pay the bills for his next salvage attempt. Some salvages payed off, others nearly cost him his home, but they all had a fantastic sense of adventure.

Ian Sholey was diving around Scarpa Flow at the same time I was reading these chapters. This added a sense of connection for me. I started searching for some of the islands on maps and looked for images of the area to give me more context. I felt like I could have walked onto a beach there and pointed to some of the wrecks that Jessop had salvaged.

In addition to the diving aspects of the story, *Goldfinder* also delves into the history and politics surrounding the salvage industry. Jessop provides fascinating insights



into the world of maritime salvage and the legal battles that often arise over ownership of sunken treasures. There are races between salvage companies to harvest riches before competitors get there and political games played with rights to salvage. Then there is the challenges posed by media stories and by family members of sailors lost at sea.

His passion for these adventures comes at significant personal costs along the way, but Jessop doesn't regret taking on the challenges and he doesn't shy away from admitting his mistakes.

Overall, *Goldfinder* is a compelling tale of adventure, history, human relations and exploration that is sure to captivate any scuba diver or maritime enthusiast. From childhood experiments with home made explosives through to high tech saturation diving this book is a thrilling ride.

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## WHO WOULD HAVE BELIEVED IT !

by **Peter Mosse**

Have you ever wondered why the red sea star, *Patiriella*, has such smooth arms and legs. I guess it is not something that would pass through a divers mind. But I found the answer on a recent dive under Cowes Jetty. I'll bet that is not an endorsement of a product that the makers of Nair would have anticipated.



# DIVE TRIP REPORT

## Point Leo

by *Arthur Kokkinos*

Today we headed off to the picturesque shores of Western Port Bay to do a late morning shore dive at Point Leo. Point Leo is located 70 kms south of Melbourne. The point Leo foreshore reserve encompasses 3.5 kms of foreshore, delicate sand dunes, woodlands, grasslands and creek side forests. It was first surveyed in 1841 and in 1861 a small town was formed. During World War 2 a naval lookout complete with gunnery was in full operation. After World War 2 Point Leo became a popular holiday destination for campers. Facilities were developed in the 1960's with hot showers and change rooms. By the 1980's the area was frequented by weekend travellers and only a hand full of permanent residents that built holiday homes. Today, Point Leo is popular with swimmers, surfers, campers, bird watchers, fisherman, picnickers, boaters, day trippers and of course, divers.



*Dive location at Point Leo*

When we arrived at Point Leo at around 11.00am we were greeted by an attendant collecting a \$4.00 entrance fee to enter the reserve. We were given a map of the area and some advice as to where was the best possible dive location. After driving around and exploring the reserve, searching for a dive spot, we all agreed to dive the same location where Adam had dived some 10 years earlier. We drove into one of the foreshore caravan parks located south of the Point Leo surf lifesaving club and parked our car with all our gear as close as possible to the steps leading down to the surf beach. Arriving at our destination at around 10.30 am the sun was out and the heat was almost unbearable. The temperature was around 35 degrees and climbing. We geared up using a nearby tree as a shade cover. After checking our gear we were ready for the long trek down the stairs and across the thick sand to the water's edge. Walking into the water, we immediately put our fins on and had a short dive brief covering our dive direction and destination.

Once we were all prepared with our dive equipment (camera and dive flag) Adam led the way with Walter and I slowly trailing on either side. Entering the water was an immediate relief from the glaring sun and increasing temperature. Within minutes we were diving at a depth of around 5 metres with no unpleasant current. Visibility was not the best at around 6 to 8 metres. Water temperature was tropical diving conditions with great underwater rock formations that included mini swim-throughs, large rocks and small ledges.

The fish life was quite disappointing. Not many fish species were spotted - only the common perch, and the odd bream. The abalone in this area are huge. We spotted many large sized green lip and black lip abalone that were living in scattered clusters, hiding under the healthy seaweed that covered large parts of the rocky formations. The deepest point we dived was around 8 metres and this was far out past the reef about 800 metres from shore. The majority of the dive was around 5 to 6 metres. We placidly and effortlessly dived, exploring a large area. We managed in getting our Abalone quota fulfilled and at the same time enjoyed the dive taking a few photo snaps along the way.

After 90 minutes we finally exited the water and slowly made our way back. From the water's edge it's about 200 metres across the thick sand to the bottom of the stairs and then 90 gruelling steps up to the caravan park. A reasonable level of fitness is strongly recommended for this dive site. After the extreme workout of getting back to the car, I can honestly say that this dive was well worth it. Only one recommendation when diving Point Leo - only dive this location when the temperature is around 20 to 25 degrees with a slight overcast and park your car as close as you can to the steps. Goodluck!!!!



*Adam Borge and Walter Medenbach  
Checking air levels during the dive*

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# ***Pioneer Divers of Australia***

## ***Salvage and Shipwrecks in the 19th Century***

Critical to Australia's remarkable transformation from penal colony to a vibrant young nation, were divers who worked underwater, building infrastructure for our cities to rival the capitals of Europe. Importantly, with ships being Australia's only means of reaching the world from its remote location, they were the divers who salvaged and repaired the vessels that provided a vital lifeline. Australia's first commercial divers, were quick to invent their own diving apparatus and experiment with ways to overcome the 'bends,' which in the 19th century was still a mystery ailment for divers.

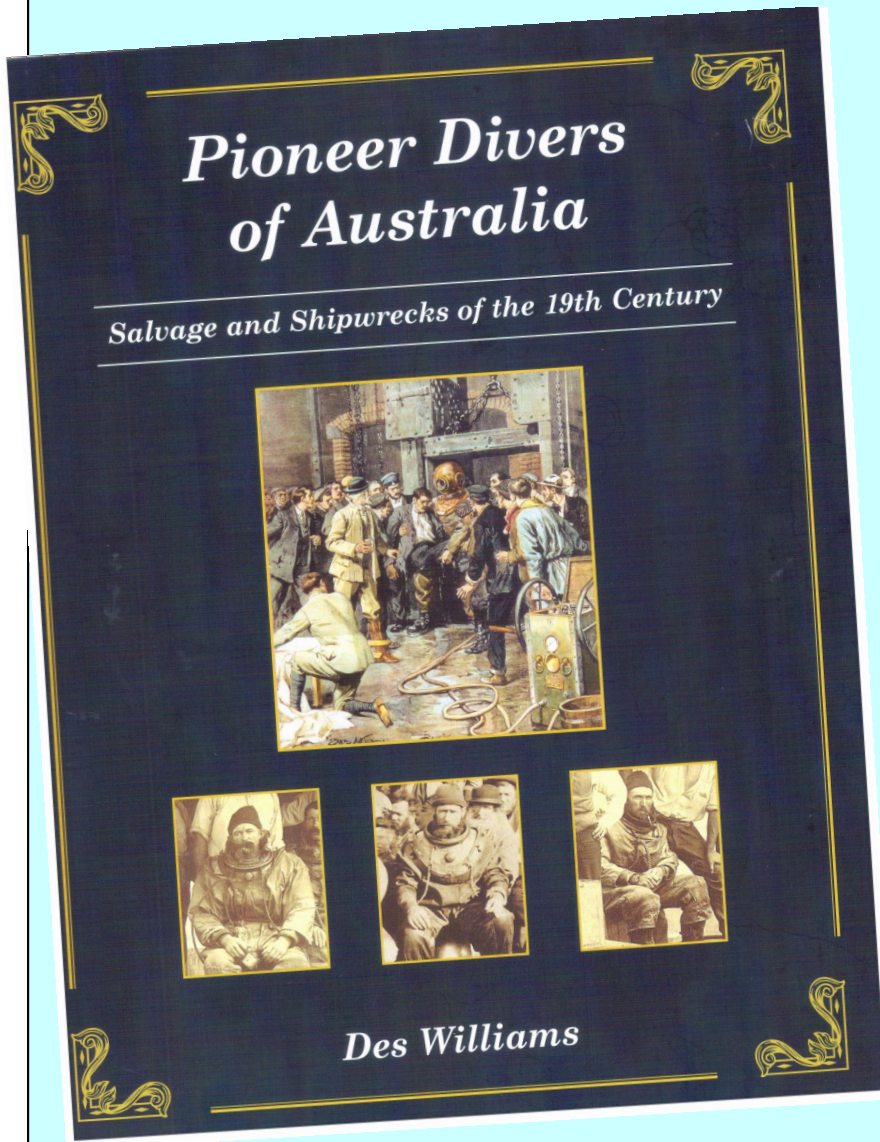
In *Pioneer Divers of Australia*, the author brings together the stories of over 70 colonial divers who toiled, often with inadequate or makeshift equipment, in deep, dark, and dangerous waters during the 19th century. Their work included salvage of many famous Australian shipwrecks, the recovery of bullion consignments, harbour works, flooded mines, bridge-building, body searches, underwater blasting, and even the search for a meteor. Such assignments were all in a day's work for the 19th century diver.

The divers of this era were courageous, versatile workers, many with little knowledge of the physiological effects of diving in deep waters. There were many accidents and deaths which are also related in the text.

This publication covers the period 1810 to 1900, from convict breath-

hold and bell divers and includes the introduction of the copper-helmeted standard dress apparatus in 1837, in Sydney. There is also a section on Australian inventions and experimentation with new deep diving apparatus patents in the late 19th century.

The book is indexed, referencing over 250 colonial and international vessels, A4 format of 188 pages, with over 100 images, some in colour/sepia, it weighs 700grams.



Price is \$40 (direct pick up in Melbourne) **OR** \$50 including postage within Australia. Available only from Des Williams:  
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# PHOTO COMPETITION

## *Winner*

November - 2022



*Peter Beaumont - Black banded sea perch - Hurricane*

# PHOTO COMPETITION

## *Runners up*

November - 2022



*Peter Beaumont - Nudie - Blairgowrie*

# PHOTO COMPETITION

## *Winner*

December - 2022



*James Chong - Night wonders - Anilao*

# PHOTO COMPETITION

## *Runners up*

December - 2022



*James Chong - Basking in the sun - Anilao*



*Peter Beaumont - Nudie - Blairgowrie*

# PHOTO COMPETITION

## *Winner*

January - 2023



*Peter Beaumont - Eel - Shiprock NSW*



# PHOTO COMPETITION

## *Runners up*

January - 2023



*Peter Mosse - BRO piggy back - San Remo*



*Peter Beaumont - Pineapple fish - Shiprock NSW*

# PHOTO COMPETITION

# *Equal Winner*

February - 2023



*Peter Mosse - Flamboyant crab - San Remo*

# PHOTO COMPETITION

# *Equal Winner*

February - 2023



*Bobbi O'Riley - Amongst the coral - Richlieu Thailand*

# PHOTO COMPETITION

## *Runners up*

March - 2023



*Marc Alexander - Harlequin shrimp - Richelieu Thailand*

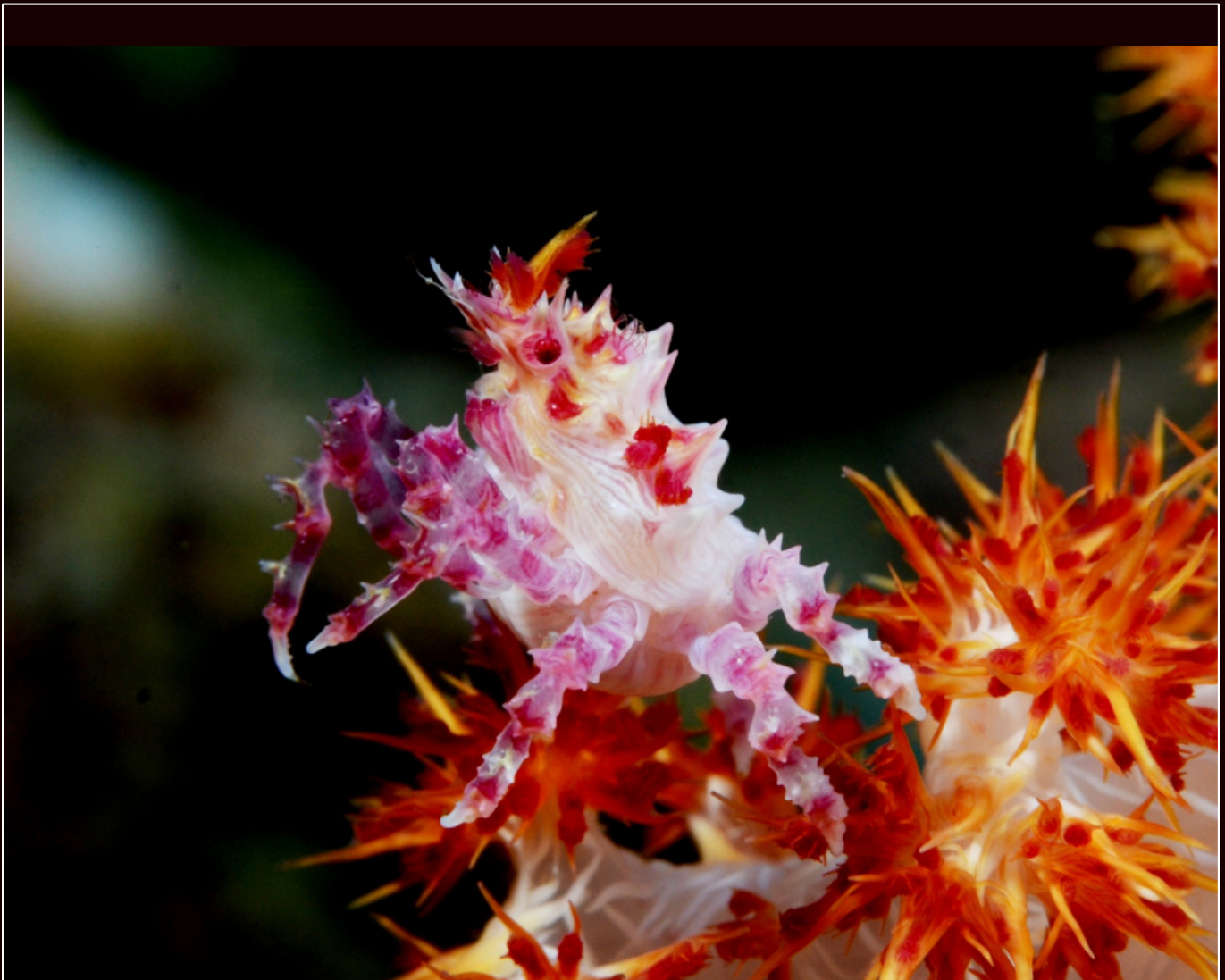


*Mark Alexander - Nudibranch - Surin Thailand*

# PHOTO COMPETITION

# *Winner*

March - 2023



*Jenny Cheng - Colourful crab - Raja Ampat*

# PHOTO COMPETITION

## *Runners up*

March - 2023



*Peter Beaumont - Eel and redfish - Lord Howe Island*



*Bobbi O'Riley - Hanging Around - Blairgowrie*

# PHOTO COMPETITION

## *Winner*

April - 2023



*Denys Smerchanskyi - Glow - Dampier Strait*



# Club Equipment

As a reminder to all, we have a range of club equipment for use by VSAG Club Members.

This includes 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 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> 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 - Brian Heatherich.

The general email address to enquire about accessing of equipment is [equipment@vsag.org.au](mailto: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.



# 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

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In the event you cannot place a call, use

## VHF Channel 16

and follow the Radio Emergency Message Protocols shown below.

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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 & Club Roles 2023-2024

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**Club Awards & Points** - Arthur Kokkinos

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**Photo Competition** - Angus Stuart-Adams

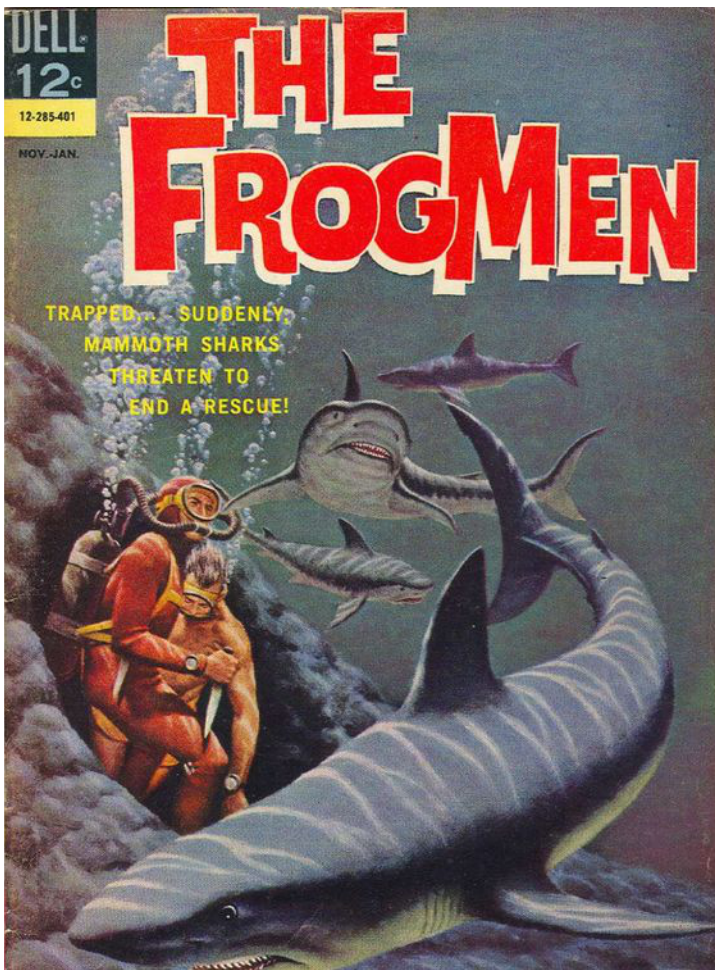
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