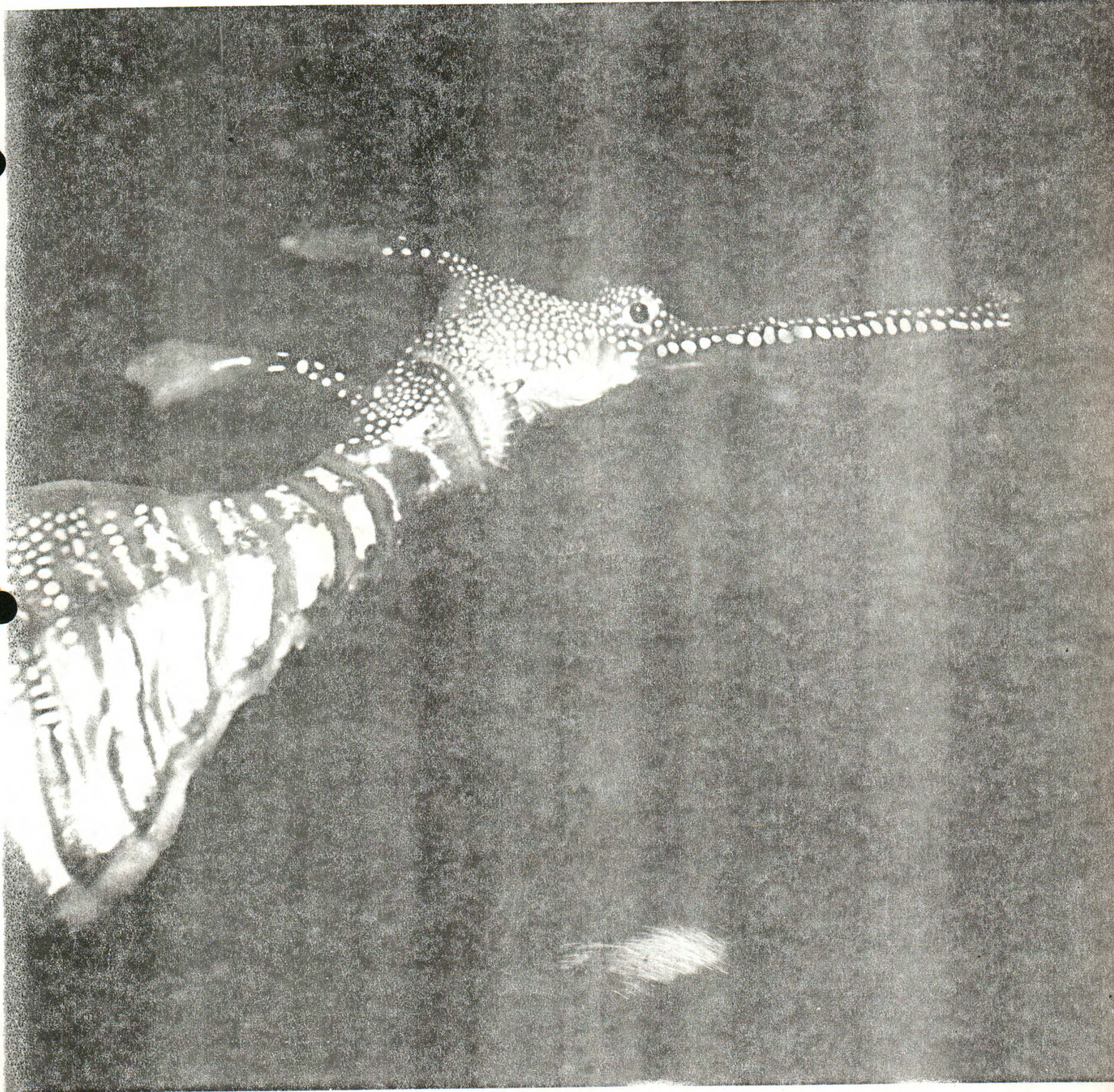
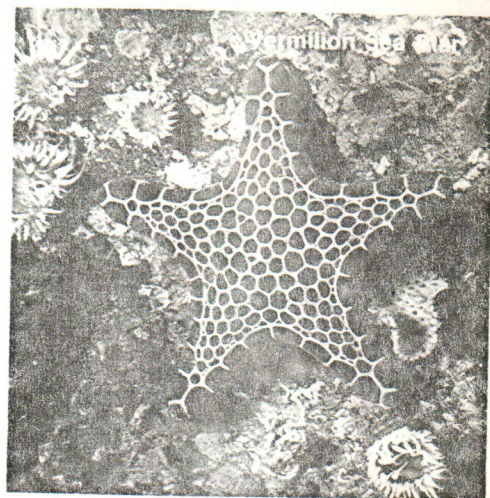


SOUTH PACIFIC DIVERS



**JANUARY/FEBRUARY
1982**

SOUTH PACIFIC DIVERS

=====

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1982

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Secretary:	Diane North, 132 Aitchison Street, Crows Nest.	Phone: 438 1951
Treasurer:	Mark Livermore, 4 Attunga Street, Baulkham Hills.	Phone: 686 1315
Photographic Officer:	Bob Smith, 60 Fontainbleau Street, Sans Souci.	Phone: 529 3818
Social Secretaries:	Brenda Taylor, 2 Scarborough Street, Bundeena.	Phone: 523 4403
	Karen Smith, 60 Fontainbleau Street, Sans Souci.	Phone: 529 3818
Publicity Officer:	Audrey Mansfield, 37 Weber Cres., Emerton.	Phone: 628 8172

* * * * *

BOAT OWNERS

Bob Smith
Sans Souci

Telephone: 529 3818

Pat Manly
Lansvale

Telephone: 728 6808

Rick Latimer
Georges Hall

Telephone: 726 7818

Penny Sullivan
Cronulla

Telephone: 523 6302

Garry Ryan
Farnborough Heights.

Telephone: 042 29 2111

Mark Livermore
Baulkham Hills

Telephone: 686 1315

Martin Kandilas
Georges Hall

Telephone: 726 3570

Rick Croucher
Cronulla

Telephone: 523 0080

Peter Stratford
Ashfield

Telephone: 798 5757

John Blaszczyk
Yagoona

Telephone: 709 5535

* * * * *

South Pacific Divers - January/February, 1982.

Dear Members,

Sorry about the late issue but with Christmas and all the other festivities I'm afraid the time just wasn't there, but still, better late than never.

Carl and Angie paid us a visit at the October Meeting with Carl showing some interesting slides on oil rigs and giving a running commentary on his current work on them with plenty of background. We thank Carl very much for making the night entertaining and educating.

By the way, rumour has it that Angie is expecting a baby. One comment at January Meeting, "The Australian trip did it." "What! Not Carl?"

The November Meeting proved very interesting with the Sydney Bottle Club coming along to educate us on glass bottles of all shapes and sizes. I think we must all agree that it was very enlightening and I'm sure a few of us will not overlook those horrible looking growth encrusted bottles on the bottom any longer.

There's not much to say regarding the Narooma weekend. I think Dianne's report in this month's magazine tells it all very well.

We had a barbecue night on the Saturday and I had so much to write in "Tittle Tattle" but it was coming so fast and furious that I forgot it all. Never mind, next time I'll be on the ball.

The Parachuting Weekend went off beautifully as Ann's account tells us, with many incidents of interest. I'm sorry I missed it. Slides by Martin at the January Meeting. "A picture says a thousand words."

December Meeting was quite cosy. Only lasted for about an hour and the few of us that was there then adjourned to the bar for a quiet (mm) drink.

Well, Christmas has come and gone for yet another year celebrated by another one of our famous Christmas Parties. In true SPD style we all turned up at the Gledswood Winery decked out in our best country and western gear. Just because it happened to be Bush Night that night didn't dampen our spirits (hic). We sang along with the band and danced all their dances. Square dancing will never be the same again.

Pete, dressed as Audie Murphy, and his wife as a dance hall girl, along with Jim and Kelly received the best dressed prizes but I must say we had a lot of trouble to make Pete keep his cowboy suit on.

A new title was dreamed up by someone and I won "the girl with the longest legs" but we all know it should have been "the girl with the shortest skirt". (Deviates).

Ross decided to "put to pasture" until the early hours of the morning. It wasn't the drink he says. He was tired. Martin also showed us some slides of these happenings at the January Meeting, with everyone having a good laugh, mostly at themselves.

cont.... /

South Pacific Divers - January/February, 1982.

I didn't get a report on the dive at Gunnamatta Bay so I can't tell you all about it, but I hope you all had a good dive.

We seem to be getting new members at every meeting. I think we deserve it. Where else could they find a better club to belong to?

Don't forget, for all the coming dives, liaison officers will be appointed at the previous meeting to the dive so if you want to get a place on a boat contact the liaison officer or the boat owner direct. (All boat owners are listed in the magazine).

Well I guess that's all for now.

Thanks to everyone who sent or gave me articles to print in the magazine.

A happy new year and safe diving to all.

Audrey

COMING DIVES AND ACTIVITIES

=====

First, an apology must be made to all Club Members.

The Tuglow weekend which was scheduled for the 23/24 January, 1982 will now be held on the 20/21 February, 1982.

Apologies to all who may be inconvenienced by this change in date.

Contacts for this weekend are: Bob Smith - 529 3818

Terry Mansfield - 628 8172

Tuglow caves are situated in the Kanangra Boyd National Park, behind Jenolan Caves in the Blue Mountains. This is a fairly strenuous cave to explore but very rewarding for the photographer or for the person looking for adventure of a slightly different nature.

We camp beside the Cow Mung river - the water is delicious to wallow in on a hot day and very relaxing.

The night life is pretty rowdy - just ask anyone who has spent the weekend there before with the Club. The animals aren't the noisy ones either.

Anyway, for a weekend with a difference with adventure, sunbathing, camping, and loads of fun give Terry or Bob a ring, or have a talk with them at the January meeting.

* * * * *

7th February, 1982

Dive at Bushrangers Bay - Bass Point.

This will be a family Barbecue day. Meet at 8.30 a.m. at Shellharbour Hotel.

* * * * *

20/21st February, 1982

Caving Trip - as above.

* * * * *

6th/7th March, 1982

Diving weekend at Currarong, Jervis Bay. This will be a camping weekend so get all your gear ready. (Open to discussion at Club Meeting).

* * * * *

cont..../2

Coming Dives and Activities

-2-

4th April, 1982

Birchgrove Park Wreck Dive.

Meet at Palm Beach (by the jetty) at 7.30 a.m.

* * * *

1/2nd May, 1982

Diving weekend at Nelson's Bay.

Details of this weekend will be discussed at Club meeting previous.

* * * *

SOCIAL SCENE

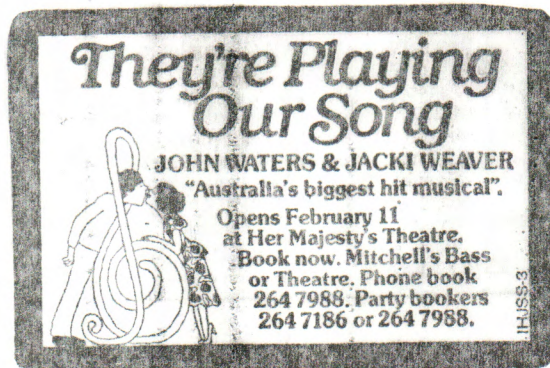
House warming party at the Livermore's. 27th February, 1982.

Bring you own drinks and meat and, for those who require them, swimming togs.

* * * *

Wednesday, 17.3.82 at 8.00 p.m.

Tickets at March Meeting at \$12.00 per head. We need 25 people in the party to keep it at this price.



South Pacific Divers - January/February, 1982.

MONTAGUE ISLAND - DIVING WEEKEND
3/4/5th Oct. 81.
=====

I think that everyone on arrival at Narooma was pleasantly surprised to find the excellent quality of the flats we had managed to rent for the weekend. The only problem was, would they survive the battering of the wind that night.

It was not surprising to wake up Saturday morning to learn diving was out. The seas looked pretty rough, the sky ominous and the forecast for the afternoon even worse. Most of us drove around for a while looking for alternative dive sites in case conditions were the same the next day but with little luck.

Fortunately, Sunday turned out to be a classic day. With calm seas and blue skies we merrily loaded our gear into two sharkcats and one private boat.

If only the water had been warmer the dive could have been described as luxurious. The ride out was fast and furious (John did not really have the throttle fully open to keep up!) There were not only plenty of seals around but also plenty of other divers during the course of the morning. The seals as usual proved inquisitive and entertaining - the most heard comment was, "Don't the divers look clumsy." Everyone who wanted to had a couple of dives and one group fitted in a snorkel on some rocks too. A number of the divers were carrying cameras so we look forward to seeing some good seal entries for next year's photographic competition.

Sadly that was where our diving at Narooma ended because that afternoon we could not find a dive shop with time to fill our tanks. We have learnt that on our next visit we either book our tanks in, as another club did, to gain priority, or take our own compressor. Happily everything was not lost.

With everyone together in the flats we managed to organise a dive on the way home at J.B. for everyone who wanted to go. Unfortunately I could not make it but would like to say a very big thankyou to John for his co-operation in using his boat for the day.

Diane North

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Motor film advance. Excellent condition, 2 months old.

As featured in S.I.A. magazine.

Sample slides available. Selling at \$295.00.

Interested divers contact: Bruce Meyer Ph. 533.2218 A.H.

PARACHUTING WEEKEND - BRANXTON - 17-18TH OCT, 1981

Everybody but one arrived at the Drop Zone on time, some a lot earlier. We had 20 students in all consisting of 17 boys and 3 girls. Wives, friends, babies and dog were also there to make sure we didn't "chicken out". Bob and Karen Smith were busily shooting film on everything going on and they were soon joined by many others.

There was lots of excitement as everyone had turns of going through their drill, practicing the landing jumps and having a run on the Dummy Chute.

The final moment came, the first 3 jumpers were picked. Rick Croucher was the first sacrifice.

They were away. We waited below and then heard the power die. A black speck was seen fall out as we all held our breath. Then all relaxed as we saw the chute open but started to panic again as he seemed to be landing close to the river. He finally landed safely about 1 kilometer away.

The Cessna 185 was up and down like a yo-yo taking up three students and the instructor each time. On landing each student had a different story and experience to talk about but couldn't wait for the next jump. You think you had learnt all about it but when you're actually jumping you realize how much more you need to know.

None of the boys were game to go up with the girls so we decided to brave it together. We squeezed Karen in with us as she wanted to take photos and come up for the ride. Penny was the first away in our group. All landed O.K. except Leslie. She just lay very still. Later we found out she had broken two bones in her leg. Luckily this was the only accident amongst the students.

Windy conditions forced the instructor to stop more jumps. At this stage two of our students had missed out on their first jump.

During the afternoon the Parachuting Club still carried on with their jumps and kept us all very entertained. There was an incident where one of their members had a malfunction then opened his reserve chute and finally landed in powerlines. He survived with a broken elbow and severe burns and managed to blacken out a large area.

On Saturday night the Parachuting Club put on a barbecue for us in a hall which was cooked and consumed by the light of a few torches as the power was still out.

Halfway through the night the lights came on, a projector was soon in operation and skydiving films were shown. The Club went crazy as the films were on. There were yells, screams, people falling off the stage, water pistols were squirted at you, you never heard or saw anything like it. We thought we were mad till we met this group.

Next morning everyone was up early hoping to get another jump in but the weather was wet and windy so most of us turned back and went home.

cont...

Parachuting Weekend - Branxton - 17/18 Oct. 1981

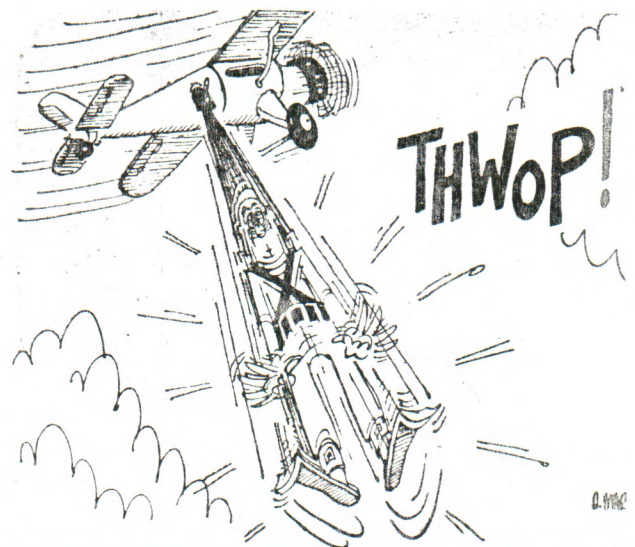
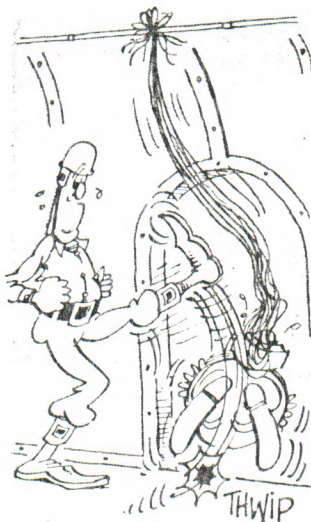
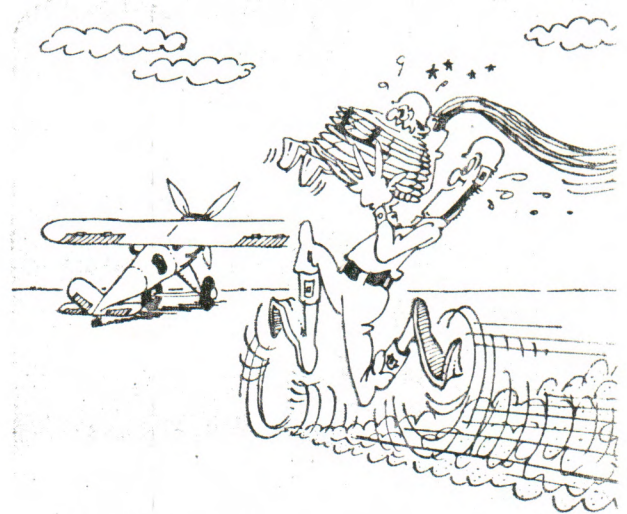
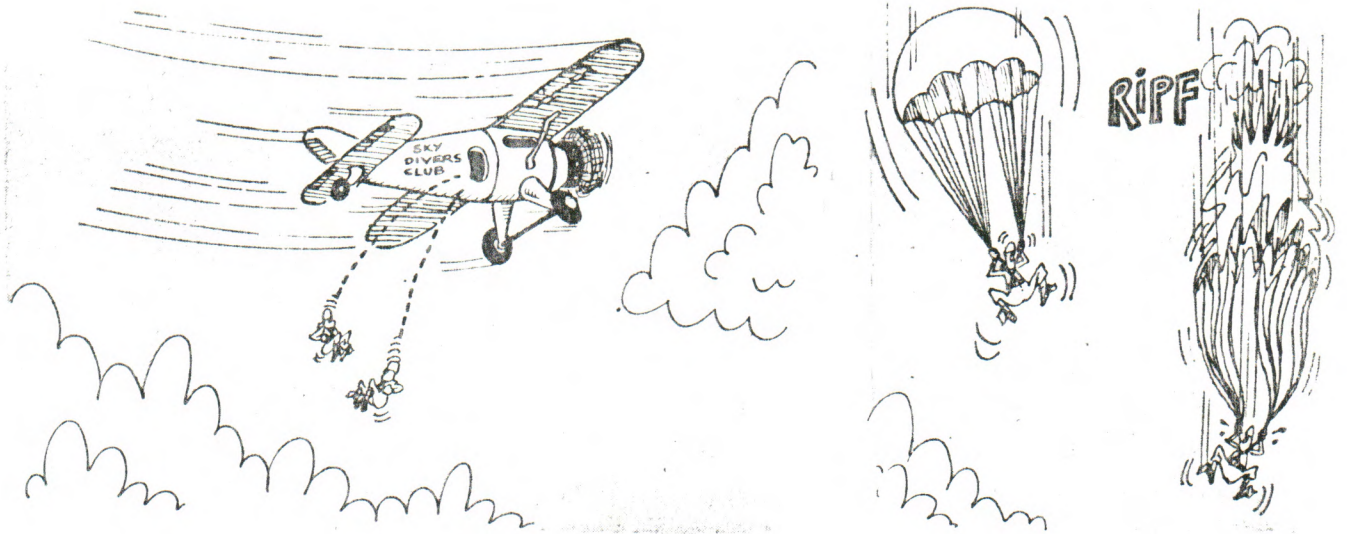
It was disappointing all the students didn't all get their first jump in, but a later date was arranged for them and for the ones who wanted to jump again.

Incidentally Martin did his own thing at landing, ignored the instructions but landed almost on target. (It's definitely Martin's year.)

The best way to describe the weekend was to use the words of Rick Croucher, "WHAT A BUZ"

Anne

ON A SATURDAY AFTERNOON



PARACHUTING WEEKEND - TITTLE TATTLE

=====

Thought you'd get away with it didn't you because I wasn't there but a little bird gave me these items of interest.....

MEMBERS NOTE ... Don't send Gary for hamburgers.

* * * *

RUMOUR The next A.V. will be about parachuting.

* * * *

Penny is always helpful, always looking for work to do. After her 1st jump decided to plough the field. What a let down for an Air Hostess.

* * * *

Heard Croucher turned into a bee, kept repeating the words "What a buzz". Then later it was a real "B" - his axle broke.

* * * *

A voice from above, "One thousand two thousand three thousand .. F***** it's open". (Guess who).

* * * *

Pisspot award for this weekend was truly earned by Garry Reid. Garry found himself lost in the wineries.

* * * *

Guess who gets to buy beer for the boys? Yes, Leslie. It seems she bet her foot wasn't broken.

* * * *

Have a guess who got a rose with breakfast on the weekend ... Where did Mark get the rose?

* * * *

Prince Porcupine can't count to 6,000 "F.....F.....F.....and it's open."

* * * *

We thought South Pacific were crazy, Newcastle Parachuting Club beat us hands down. (Parachute's down?)

* * * *

Nice watching things between your legs. Right Garry? Especially your chute.

* * * *

THE WRECK OF THE "TUGGERAH"

The coastal collier "Tuggerah" bound from Bulli to Sydney with a cargo of coal, foundered off Wattamolla shortly after 4 pm. on Saturday, 17th May, 1919. Of a crew of 16 men, 6 lives were lost including the master, Captain J. McConachie, the chief officer and the chief engineer.

The "Tuggerah" was owned by the Wallarah Coal Company Ltd. and was classed as an A1 collier. The vessel was built at Port Glasgow in 1912 and was registered in Sydney in the same year. Built of steel, she was 186 ft. 3 in. in length, with a beam of 28 ft. 9 in. and a depth of 12 ft. 6 in. Her gross tonnage was 749, her engines were 927 h.p. and she was fitted with electric light. She had only been out of Morts Dock for a month, after having undergone a very thorough overhaul, before she made her final disastrous voyage.

The steamer reached Bulli at 10 am. on that last Saturday morning, after travelling from Sydney in heavy seas which had been running for the past few days. However, the weather did not appear exceptionally rough when the "Tuggerah" was lying sheltered at the Bulli jetty, loading coal for Sydney. She finally had on board 862 tons of coal including 27 tons of bunker coal, but less than her full complement, when she left the jetty after 2 pm. She also had a list to port, the coal was untrimmed, and the hatch covers were off.

It wasn't until she passed around the Bulli reef shortly afterwards, that she was exposed to the full force of the seas and the moderate southerly gale which had been steadily increasing. Her speed was slowed to half but the coal trimming was never completed. Throughout the rest of the voyage the No. 1 hatch cover remained only partly secured and the No. 2 cover was never on.

The evidence was conflicting as to whether any heavy water was shipped on the way up the coast, or only spray. It was said that the list increased. The end came suddenly. According to the man at the wheel, a series of large waves struck her on the starboard quarter and she heeled right over to port. It was thought probable that some of the coal shifted suddenly in those heavy seas causing the vessel to lurch to port. She never righted. After this one lurch a heavy sea was shipped on the port side and the water poured down the No. 2 hatch causing the vessel to roll over and capsize. The vessel turned bottom up in a short space of time and was said to have foundered stern first within minutes of taking the first sea.

Of the two lifeboats carried at the stern, a number of men were able to get into one before she heeled right over. Other men were rescued from the water, but no trace could be found of six men, presumed drowned. The captain had been last seen on the bridge, at the telegraph, and the boat party headed by second officer R.F. Tait, could find no trace of him after she turned over; the chief engineer was sighted but when the boat party were within 20 yards of him he disappeared suddenly. When no further survivors could be found, the boat party battled their way to shore at Cronulla Beach just after 7 pm. They were taken in an exhausted state to Cronulla House for first aid, and the police were contacted. The men were then taken to the Cronulla Beach hotel, while a police sergeant and two constables left for Marley Beach - a walk of 14 miles - to maintain a nightwatch for survivors or bodies washed ashore. A search party joined them in the early hours of the following morning.

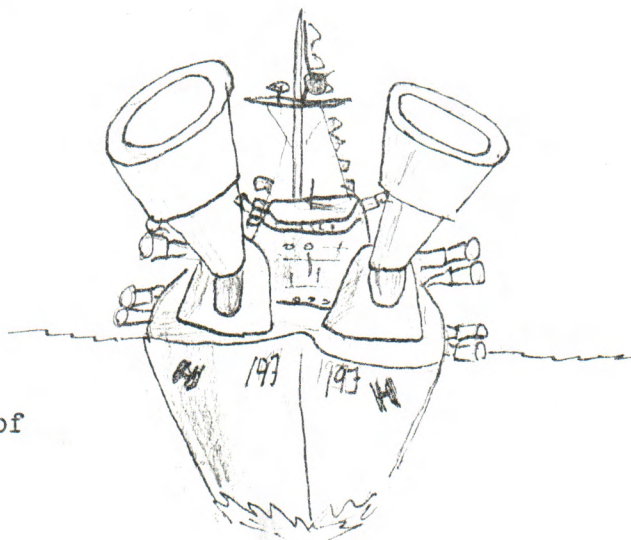
As soon as the news reached Sydney, the pilot steamer with Captain Murray in command, left port and headed south to search for the missing men but returned unsuccessful the following morning.

A preliminary inquest into the foundering was opened before Captain William Newton, Deputy Superintendent of Navigation at the Customs House, Wednesday 21st May.

The Council of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce called upon the State Government to hold an open inquiry presided over by a judge of the Supreme Court. An inquiry was opened by the Marine Court on Tuesday 3rd June 1919 (Judge Blackhouse with Captain Chudleigh and Mr. A. McKinley as assessors) and found that the load should have been trimmed and the hatches securely covered before leaving port.

BATTLE SHIPS.

Fist of fury, fascimile of
fearlessness;
Strength of steel, a superfortress
supreme;
Tapestry of tactics, tranquil yet
titanic;
Victor of the victorious, vivarium of
violence.



by David Latimer.



**AQUATIC
ASSOCIATES**

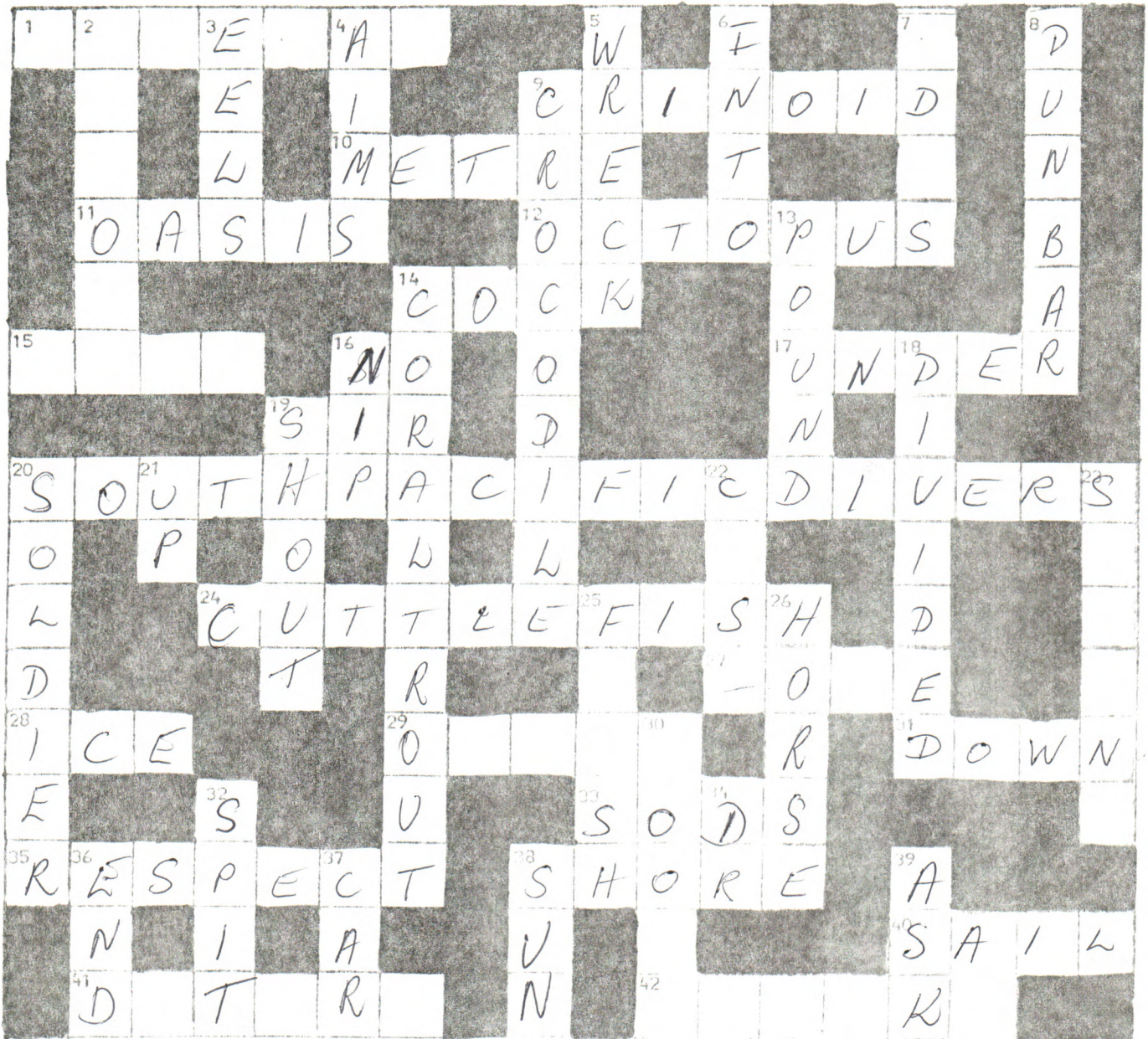
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E A Z Y W O R D

This crossword has been set out to stimulate the mind. No verbal discussion shall be entered into regarding the result.



Across

1. This fish is a ruler.
- ~~2.~~ Feathery ocean dweller.
- ~~3.~~ A measurement.
- ~~4.~~ Desert water hole.
- ~~5.~~ Bottom dweller with arms.
- ~~6.~~ Male bird.
15. Mean giant.
- ~~16.~~ A preposition.
- ~~17.~~ Beneath.
- ~~18.~~ Form of address.
- ~~20.~~ Group of adventurers.
- ~~24.~~ Swimming mollusc. with invisible shell.
27. Lord
- ~~28.~~ On the rocks.
29. An aquatic fish eating carnivore.
- ~~31.~~ To descend.
- ~~32.~~ Drunken
- ~~35.~~ To show esteem.
- ~~38.~~ Coast line.
- ~~40.~~ Under wind.
41. Wards off.
42. Voracious fish.

Down

2. Commonly speared fish.
- ~~3.~~ Snake like fish.
- ~~4.~~ Resistance (Elect.)
- ~~5.~~ Sunk ship.
- ~~6.~~ Enter.
7. Ancient Roman days.
- ~~8.~~ Sank 20.8.1857.
- ~~9.~~ Amphibious reptile.
- ~~13.~~ Old weight.
- ~~14.~~ Fish of the reef.
- ~~16.~~ End off.
- ~~18.~~ Separated.
- ~~19.~~ Loud yell.
- ~~20.~~ Military fish.
- ~~21.~~ Opposite to 'down'.
22. Needed at all times.
23. Precious metal.
25. Not old.
- ~~26.~~ Used before motor power.
30. Hold a tree.
- ~~32.~~ Cook meat on it.
- ~~34.~~ Man of medicine.
- ~~36.~~ To finish.
- ~~37.~~ Powered carriage.
- ~~39.~~ Gives heat.
- ~~42.~~ Request.

NOW TO SERIOUS THINGS

MONEY PROBLEMS ??

Mr. Wran and Mr. Frazer are working on an idea to stop us having anymore money worries.

THEY'L TAKE THE LOT !!!!

* * * *

THE DOG

Once upon a time Peter had a lovely little dog. Then one day whilst the dog was playing on the highway a bloody big truck ran him down smashing all four legs. Well, Peter, loving his dog, took him to a vet. The vet removed all four legs. Therefore, when Pete took his dog for a walk he had to carry it.

One sunny Saturday, he decided to go to the local for a couple of ales. On arrival he put the dog on the bar and ordered a large cold resch's. Halfway through his beer a stranger said "What a beaut dog you've got, What do you call him?"

"It doesn't matter," said Pete, "He won't come anyway."

* * * *

What to you call a fly that flies into an Irishman's ear ?

Space Invader !!!!

* * * *

Deep sea divers with chicken pox – do they come up to scratch?

* * * *

THE FARMERS

In the far south of Ireland there is a small town known as Wherearewe. A few miles from town live two farmers, Micheal O'Toole and Paddy Doolan. They both have adjoining farms of approximately 10 acres a piece.

One day, whilst Micheal was inspecting his fences, he found Paddy working in the corner paddock.

Micheal said, "Good morning to yer Paddy."

Paddy replied, "And a good morning te yer Micheal. My horse has gone sick."

Micheal, "Ah, mine was sick a week ago so I gave him a drink of kerosene."

Paddy: "Yeh, thanks te yer Micheal, I'll try that."

A few days past and Paddy was walking his fence again and seeing Micheal, yelled, "Micheal, I gave me horse that drink of kero and he died."

Micheal replied, "That's funny, so did mine."

* * * *

BENEATH THE NULLARBOR

Taken from DIVE South Pacific Underwater Magazine - Vol. 11 No. 5

by Ron Doughton

Only the rasp of our regulators and the thudding of our hearts disturbed the black silence of the water surrounding us. The sound seemed to distract the fleeting shadows that darted erratically on the perimeter of our torch beams. Massive, snow-white boulders lay stewn about in coarse shingle on the floor, while the ceiling and walls arched smoothly over the chaos beneath. They passed slowly, inexorably by, while we continued on our flight path, forty feet above on the ceiling. We were already six minutes in from the tunnel entrance and we still had not reached our rendezvous point.

Behind us, almost a thousand feet away, waited several dozen cave explorers (speleologists) as well as a team of back-up divers. This group had come from almost every state in Australia to participate in the first organized exploration of the underwater caves of the Nullarbor.

The name "Nullarbor" literally means "no trees" and applies to an area in Southern Australia several hundred miles either side of the Western Australian and South Australian border. The country is dry, flat, monotonous desert, which ends abruptly in steep, bare cliffs at the edge of the sea. Salt bush and the occasional stand of Mallee trees appear to be the only vegetation that can withstand the ferocious heat. Frequently during Summer, the mercury pushes past 115 degrees Fahrenheit, rendering the terrain unsuitable to most forms of animal life, including the hardy kangaroo.

Dotted along the surface of this heat-seared plain are blowholes and dolines. Dolines are sections of cave roofs that have collapsed, leaving a sizeable depression in the plain. Most of these holes are unnamed and unexplored, because of the inaccessibility of the area. Huge volumes of air rush from these openings, due to air temperature and pressure differences between the cave and the atmosphere above.

To bring an expedition into this area needed a considerable amount of careful preparation. Ian Lewis, our expedition organiser from Adelaide, had spent six months preparing equipment and raising support for the trip. Interested scientific institutions, groups and individuals were circularized and gradually the numbers increased. The number of divers had to be kept to eight, as each diver would require two or three supporters to help move his equipment in and out of the caves. A compressor and short-wave radio, cases of batteries, gallons of acetylene producing carbide and thousands of feet of rope and ladders were obtained without too much difficulty.

Some fourteen miles north of Eucla we set up camp beside the first cave. Named "Weebubbie", it was already well known to cave explorers but only as far as the lake which lay six hundred feet below the surface of the plain. It was up to the divers to fill in the question marks below the lake's surface.

During the first couple of days the teams, accustomed themselves to the environment and working conditions. However, two diving instructors from Adelaide, Phil Prust and Bob Turnbull had arrived before us and had found what they thought to be a new air cave on the other side of the main siphon. They had hopelessly tangled their safety line preventing further progress just when their torches had picked a black flat ceiling some eighty feet away. When we arrived at the campsite, both were hopping from one foot to the other in their eagerness to fill their tanks and get back downstairs.

cont...../

Beneath the Nullarbor (cont...)

Next day saw all the diving team assembling gear on a small peninsula jutting into the lake. The gear was carried down, over boulder piles and nasty vertical sections, with the combined efforts of divers and "dry cavers". All in all, hundreds of man-hours were expended in just getting cylinders into lake areas, where divers could use them. The "dry cavers" call this sort of work "trogging", and regard it as a necessary evil of all underground exploration.

Under the glow from the carbide lights, Phil and Bob suited up and jumped in. Ninety minutes later they returned, their torches illuminating the six hundred foot length of lake with columns of green fire.

They had done it! They had found another air chamber as expected but it appeared to be disappointing in character. Later measurements showed it to be oval-shaped with a length of one hundred and forty feet. A red dome extended above the water surface to a maximum height of about twenty feet. There was nowhere a diver could get out to rest as the walls were perfectly smooth. The floor consisted of a boulder pile some forty feet below water level. Visibility underwater exceeded many hundreds of feet which is probably unique and certainly unusual for underground salt water conditions.

David Warnes and I made up the second team. Dave is one of Australia's most experienced cave divers having dived for many years in the Mt. Gambier district of South Australia.

We slipped under the surface at the end of the lake and followed the red floating cord left by Bob and Phil into the domed chamber. The swim took the longest eight minutes in history, as the enormous width of the tunnel gave me the impression that we were barely moving. Once inside the domed chamber we discovered to our intense disappointment that the tunnel sealed off in one hundred feet of water on the opposite side of the dome. There were three very small openings in the boulders which appeared to go deeper but we ignored these. Our air was almost half consumed; it was time to return.

Back at the surface camp, we discussed the results. Any thought of further exploration beyond the air dome was dropped as it was becoming too deep and far away to work. However, on the way out of the air dome tunnel I had noticed the gaping maw of another side tunnel yawning off to the right into black watery infinity.

This had intrigued me naturally enough, so I'd swum over to the entrance straining against my protesting safety line. Dave had followed and flashed his narrow beam lamp into it. A 150 foot pillar of light hammered at the blackness revealing a cavern running straight as an arrow as far as the eye could see.....

Air was running out so we determined to return with fresh tanks but something caught the corner of my eye.

There was something in there!

Up on the roof I had glimpsed what appeared to be stalactites! Now this really gave the adrenals a kick. Glistening in my wide beam torch there they were; hundreds of them! The question was, what on earth were they? As soon as I approached the nearest, the air from my exhaust blew them to shreds. A fine debris of what appeared to be algae drifted down leaving little trace of the things themselves. Plant, animal or whatever, I determined to return with a camera.

It was decided to explore the new tunnel dubbed the Railway Tunnel as far as possible. Dave Warnes, Mike Turner and myself made up the first team, while Phil Prust and Bob Turnbull would make the second trip.

cont...../

Beneath the Nullarbor (cont...)

After our teams' abortive beginning, Phil and Bob had little better luck. They entered the Railway tunnel and swam three hundred feet into it. Suddenly, Phil thought that the line behind them had broken because Bob, swimming behind, had pulled in some slack line. They returned rather faster than they entered although Bob was wondering what the fuss was all about. The line, of course, was completely intact. The psychological pressure of working for long periods under hundreds of feet of water and rock was beginning to tell on everyone.

The next day was to be the last for exploration as time was running out. An air of tenseness developed among the divers. The dry cavers, being unfamiliar with the problems of diving, left the planning to us. Dave Warnes, who was disgusted with his previous day's performance, volunteered to go as lead reel man with a double 72 breathing unit. We had avoided using the double sets to date because of the extreme effort needed to get them down to the lake. Bob Turnbull was to accompany him with a similar rig. Bob Lea, my wife Denyse and myself were to follow to photograph the "thing" colonies on the ceiling and provide light beacons for the lead divers to home in on. The incredible visibility would allow our torches to be seen for an indefinable distance and this would increase the safety factor for the lead divers.

As we swam along the red cord towards the rendezvous point, we noticed the glow of torches ahead. Exactly on time, we entered a small amphitheatre that marked the "Railway Tunnel" entrance. Dave and Bob had tied on the extra reel and with a final wave of the torches disappeared up the tunnel. As we watched them depart, their lights became slightly blue in colour while becoming smaller and closer together. Eventually we could see only two white pinpricks when they too disappeared behind a far distant corner.

We turned back to our job. Bob gingerly approached the tendril-like growths. One extra large piece crumpled like a dead sock after a wave of his hand. My fingers screwed the Rollei controls. If any shots were to be taken of this phenomenon they'd have to be taken quickly! A reassuring burst of brightness from the flash unit left time to relax and plan the next shot. Slowly, I sank to the floor with fingers groping to replace the expended bulb. The job completed, I lifted off to frame another photograph, WHEN WITH A MIGHTY CRUNCH, I was flung headlong into the rock and ooze of the tunnel floor.

I groped around with a flailing hand to find what was pinning me down. My breathing degenerated to a series of erratic gasps while I heard the first insistent knock of hysteria on the door of my consciousness. With a sense of immense relief, I found that my steel snap-hook had snagged the bottom in such a way as to lay me out flat when I attempted to move away. Without thinking twice, I gave the short nylon cord a tremendous heave. No deal! Now I was really in the soup. I tried to relax and feel back along the line to find the fool snaphook. Highly annoyed, I found a crevice hiding my snap-hook; one which was deliberately designed not to fit human fingers. Eventually, the thought occurred to me to cut away the line with my knife. As I groped down to my calf, I climbed up to the ceiling and looked back. Bob Lea was circling a white hemisphere of watery smoke some thirty feet wide looking very puzzled indeed. He later said that he was just about to plunge in and see what was happening, when I popped out like a jackrabbit. At any rate I still had a good tight grip on the Rollei

We returned to the small amphitheatre at the "Railway tunnel" entrance and waited in midwater. Very soon we saw the torch beams of the others returning down the length of the tunnel. They were over three hundred feet away, returning slowly to conserve air. We had to return immediately to the lake surface, having only single bottles, which once again were almost exhausted.

On the return our torches lit both the ceiling and floor at once; a legacy from the highly reflective air now trapped in pools on the ceiling. Dave and Bob had pushed 600 feet into the "Railway tunnel" reaching a floor depth approaching a hundred feet. Bob had seen another cavern disappearing downwards through the left floor, while Dave, as reel man on the ceiling reported prolific growths of our weird tendrils "hanging in hundreds, just like chandeliers".

cont.../

Beneath the Nullarbor (cont...)

Our time at "Weebubbie" was finished and we were due to move on to other caves in the area. Once again we found adventure in the massive, water-locked catacombs, colored from the purest white to the deepest stygian black. However, the Nullarbor has given up only a minute few of its precious secrets. Several thousand feet of tunnel are now known; this representing only the tiniest fraction of one percent of the area available for cave formation. The Nullarbor has thrown down the gauntlet for all.

* * * *

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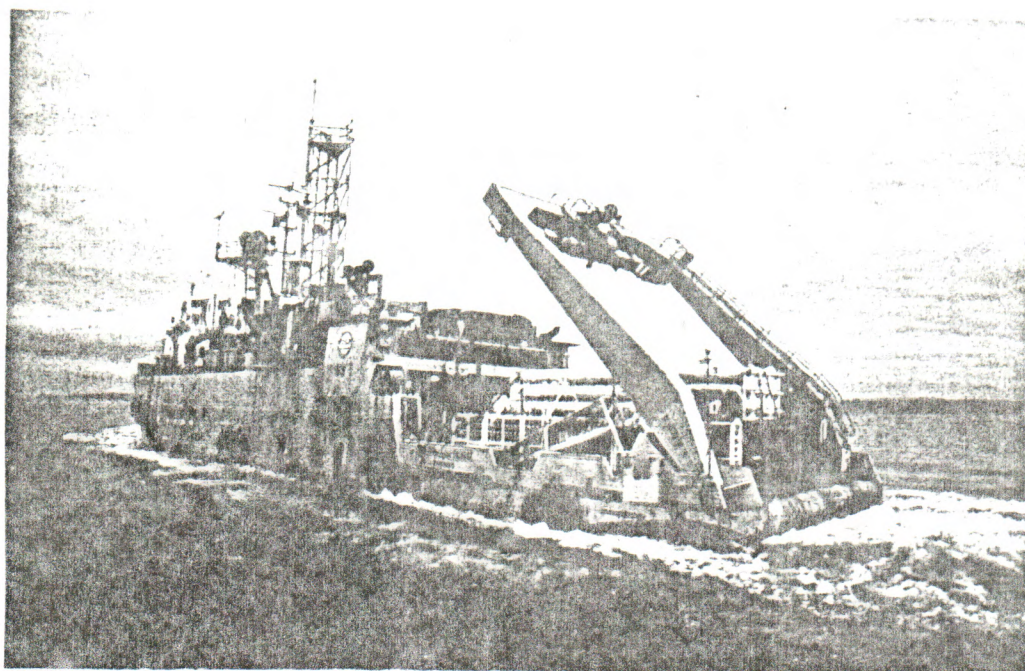
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* * * *



The diving vessel *Stephaniturm* kept on station above the wreck in all but the wildest weather

ADVENTURE

HOW STALIN'S GOLD WAS RECOVERED FROM THE ARCTIC

The British cruiser HMS Edinburgh was sunk in Arctic waters in 1942. She took some \$76 million of Russian gold down 267 metres with her. All but \$7 million of this has been recovered in a diving operation on the limits of endurance. Writer BARRIE PENROSE and photographer IAN YEOMANS of the London Sunday Times report on the richest prize in the history of the sea.

IT WAS, quite simply, the greatest salvage operation in the annals of the sea. Five tonnes of Stalin's gold had been raised 267 metres through Arctic water from the wreck of the British cruiser *HMS Edinburgh*, crippled in action by Hitler's navy in 1942. Some of the divers were "in saturation," breathing helium and oxygen and living under the sea or in compression chambers for 42 days. Nobody on a salvage operation has worked at that depth and in such cold for so long.

But to Keith Jessop, the 48-year-old Yorkshireman who created the operation with a mortgaged house, faith and little else, success was a silver Porsche. The car was waiting for him on the quay

at Peterhead in Scotland when he returned from the Arctic last month with millions in gold.

"Apart from a new house, that's all I'm getting," Jessop had claimed throughout his seven-week expedition to the Barents Sea. "My money will go into new wrecks and cargoes. I'm obsessed by them."

It was more than a decade ago that Jessop became dedicated to the *Edinburgh*. "Diving is my game and once I had an interest in the *Edinburgh* I never dropped it. I could have gone out in the North Sea diving, earning £120 (\$203), £130 (\$220) a day — that's easy. But I forfeited all that to find *her* cargo."

HMS Edinburgh was carrying gold

bullion when she sank in the Barents Sea in May, 1942. But in a remote area 120 nautical miles north of the Russian port of Murmansk, nobody knew the spot on the sea-bed where *Edinburgh* rested. Jessop visited the Public Record Office at Kew and the Ministry of Defence, and found that British and German records showed a bewilderingly wide range of potential positions. In fact, an area of some 3750 square kilometres.

From the Public Record Office Jessop learned that the *Edinburgh* had been carrying five tonnes of gold bullion, Russia's payment for American weapons and supplies delivered early in the war. When the first two torpedoes



Gold fever: Keith Jessop with a stack of gold bars. Behind him (left), with moustache, is John Rossier from Zimbabwe who found the first ingot. Right is diver Banjo West

hit the 10,000-ton cruiser on the afternoon of April 30, 1942, some 60 officers and men were killed. For more than two days after the attack the *Edinburgh* kept afloat and the remaining 750 men on board were transferred to other ships in the ill-fated convoy QP11. But she was torpedoed again and Rear Admiral Stuart Bonham Carter, who was in the cruiser when she was hit, scuttled her to prevent her capture.

"I had to find out how badly the ship had been damaged, and where exactly," says Jessop, "because I'd then get a clearer idea about whether the gold could have survived the various explosions." Fortunately for Jessop, and rival salvors interested in the *Edinburgh*, a good deal of information was contained in torpedo damage reports written only

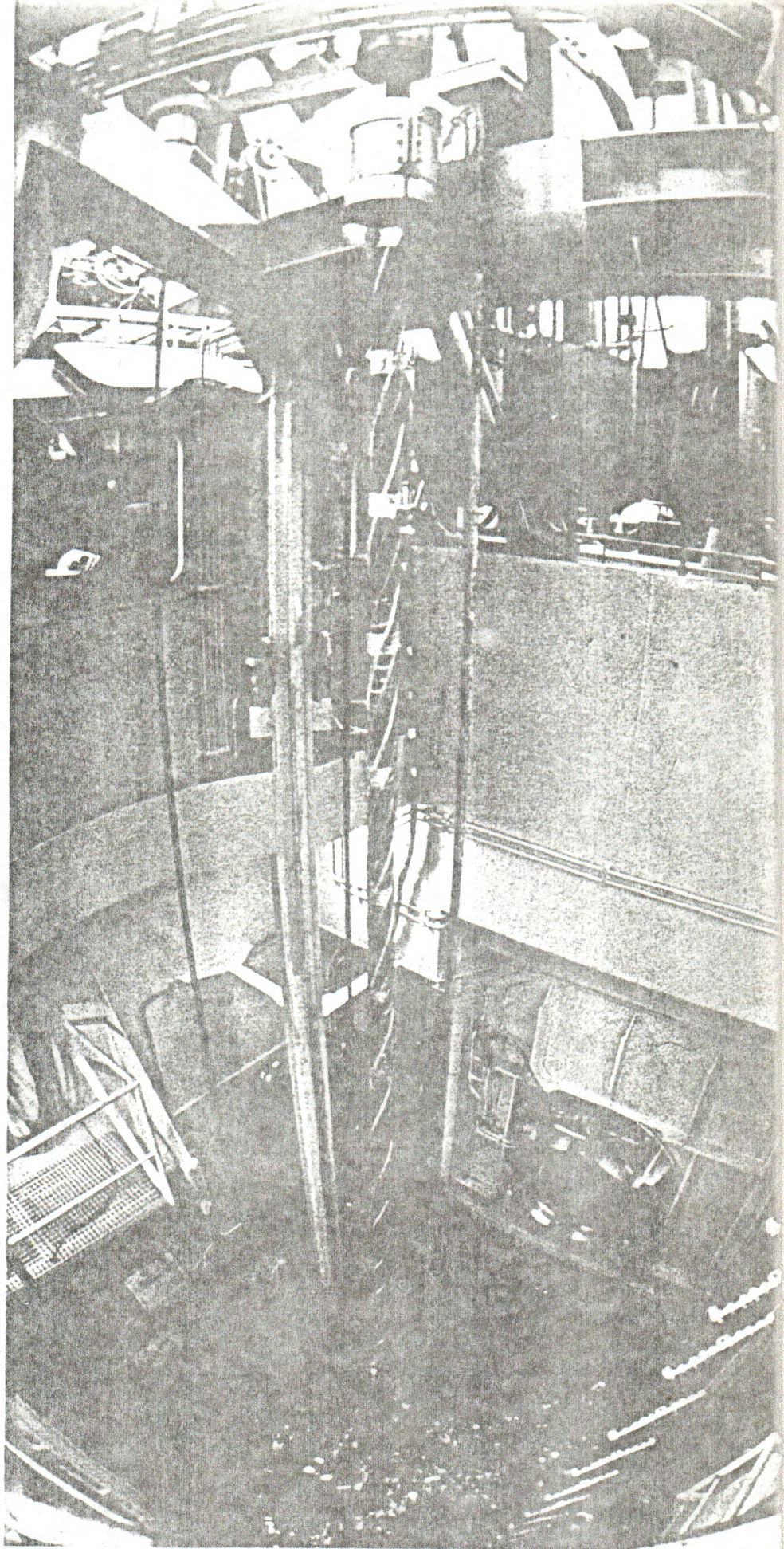


Divers Brian Cutler (left) and Banjo West seen through a porthole of the diving bell

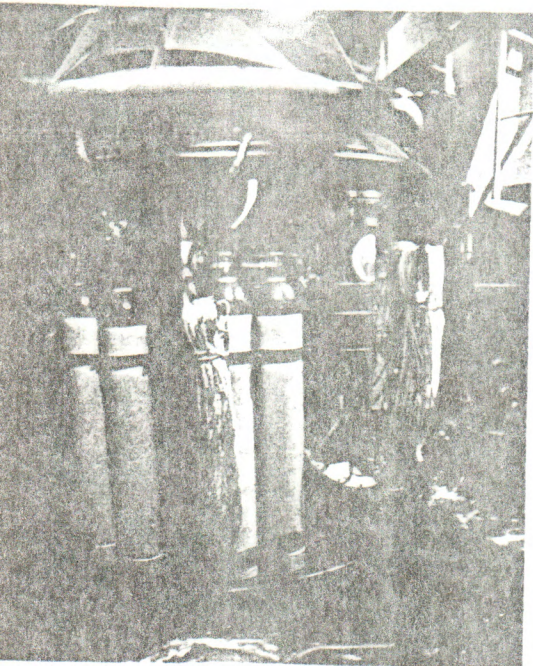
days after the cruiser had been attacked.

Careful research of a potential wreck is a vital part of a salvor's work. A Southampton salvage firm, Risdon Beazley, who had first shown interest in the cruiser as early as 1954, employed a professional researcher to go through the *Edinburgh's* records. Jessop, who is the first to admit he is no scholar, pressed ahead alone.

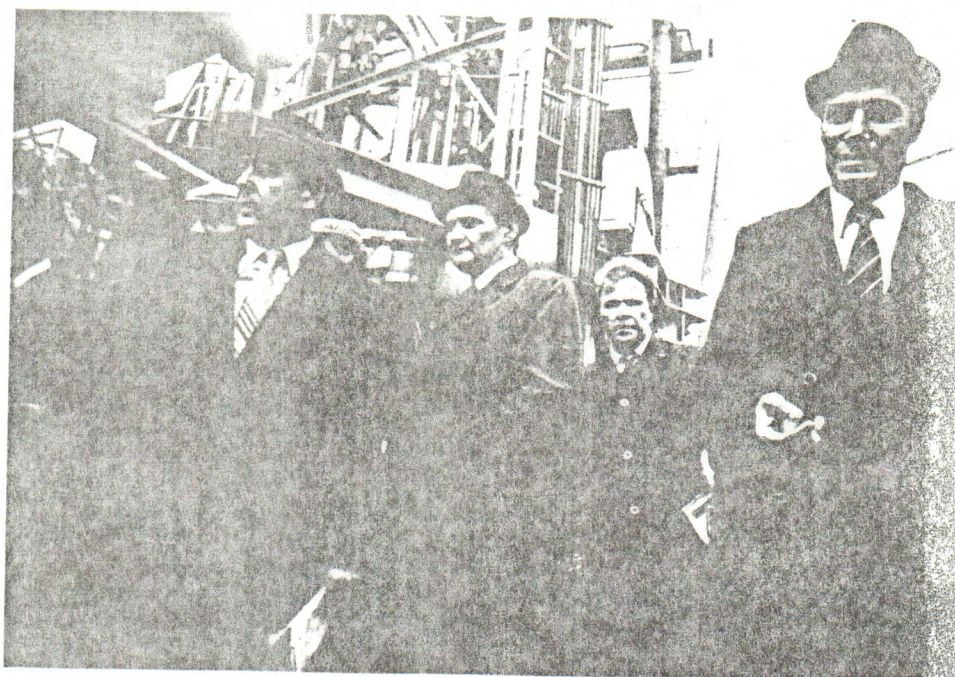
He discovered that the gold hoard on the *Edinburgh* might turn out to be 10 tonnes, rather than five signed for by the cruiser's captain, Hugh Faulkner, in Murmansk, in April 1942. The double bonanza is suggested in the memoirs of a Russian admiral, Arseni Golovko, who was in command at Murmansk when the bullion was put on board. In



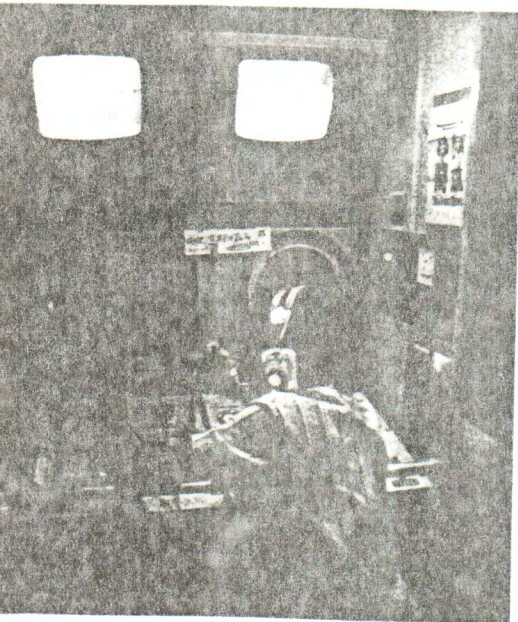
The "moon pool" through which the diving bell was lowered to the wreck



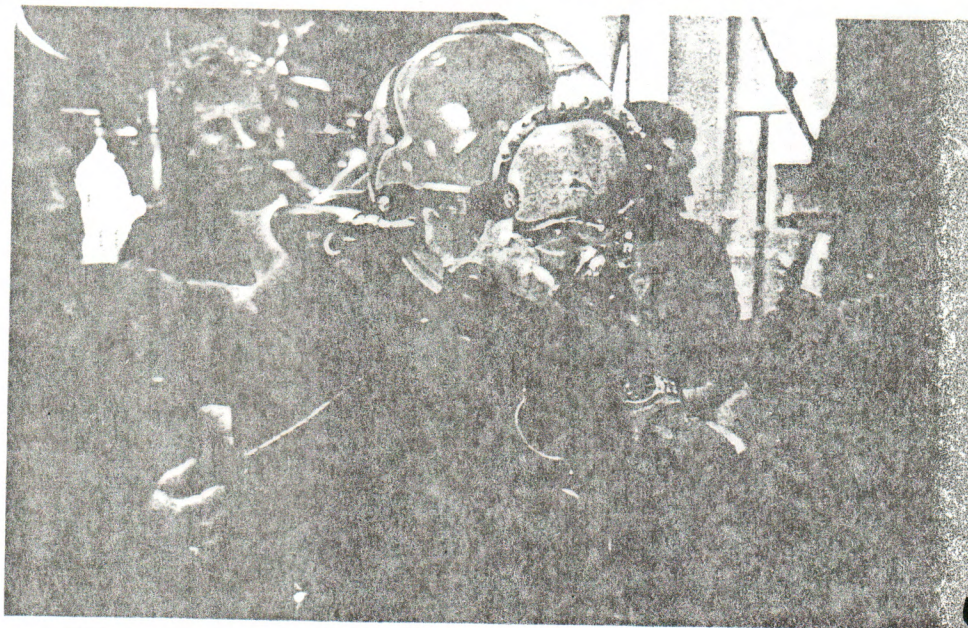
The diving bell with emergency tanks



Russian treasury officials overseeing the operation on arrival at Murmansk



Inside the diving control shack



Divers try on equipment designed for survival at extreme depths and temperatures

his book, *With the Red Fleet*, Golovko wrote: "The cruiser . . . went to the bottom with her cargo of gold weighing about 10 tons — equivalent to the sum of 100 million roubles."

For more than three years Keith Jessop believed that the *Edinburgh* might well contain 10 to 10½ tonnes of Russian bullion, worth some \$152 million by today's value. "Even though we've recovered most of the cargo from the bomb room, where five tonnes was known to have been stored, I'm not convinced the *Edinburgh* does not have more gold on board. It could have been put somewhere else on the ship," says Jessop. The Russian Government, including the two Russian representatives aboard the *Stephaniturm*, Leonid

Melodinsky and Igor Ilin, do not discount the possibility.

When Jessop began his search for the *Edinburgh* he had relatively little money to invest in any salvage attempt. He mortgaged his house and ran up bills to keep his one-man project alive. But he still needed some £2 million (\$3.2 million) and permission to find the *Edinburgh* on the sea-bed, a task that had previously stumped British, Russian and Norwegian salvors.

Although *HMS Edinburgh* had been designated an official war grave in 1954, in an effort to deter "pirate" attempts to lift the cruiser's gold, there was little the British Government could do to prevent an unauthorised entry into the wreck. The War Grave Commission's major

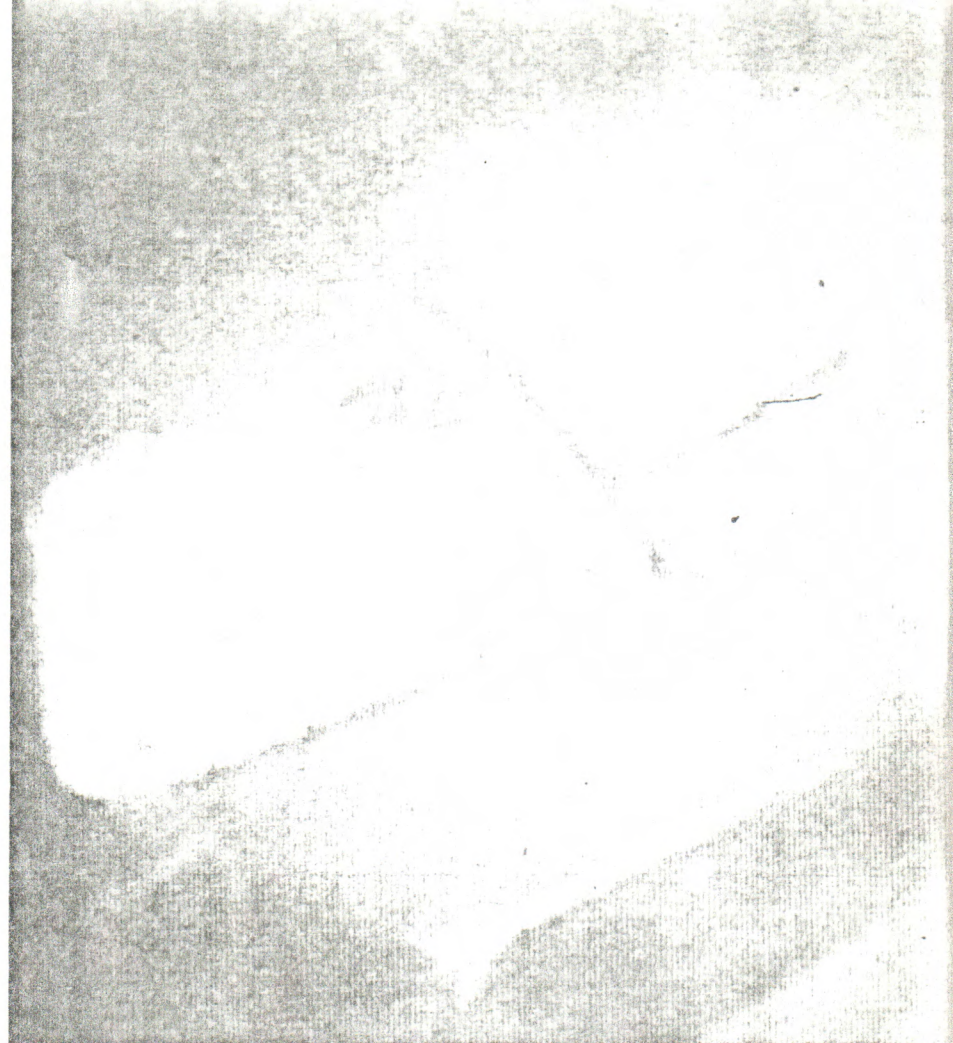
ally at that time was the simple fact that the wreck was 267 metres down.

Until the late 50s commercial interest in deep diving was restricted to the occasional salvage operation with professional divers rarely operating below 67 metres. But once gas had been struck in the North Sea in 1965, men emerged who could dive sufficiently deep to build and later service the new oilfield developments. Breathing a mixture of helium and oxygen they were helping to create an industry out of saturation diving. Keith Jessop commented: "There was simply no reason why I shouldn't convert North Sea technology to the salvage game and for a project like the *Edinburgh*."

But there were other difficulties.



Dr Alford with recovered pom-pom shells



Gold bars stacked in the bomb room; (inset) salvaged gold bars worth £1 million

Some Ministry of Defence officials were openly expressing their extreme distaste for any salvage attempts, however daring, on a British war grave. In a letter written in December 1978, David Brown, a senior officer at the MOD, told Jessop: "Repugnance at the idea of disturbing the wreck of a warship which contains the remains of those lost with her is based on principle, not politics, and it is improbable that this will become sufficiently eroded to result in any change of opinion for some time to come."

Other officials, though, were pointing out that in 1954 Risdon Beazley, the Southampton salvors, had not been refused permission to salvage the *Edinburgh* and their commitment had never been withdrawn, even if the Admiralty might wish it had been. Indeed, one year later, and unbeknown to Jessop and his rival salvors, Ministry of Defence lawyers were making clear in inter-departmental memos that nothing could be done to stop a salvage firm from trying to raise *Edinburgh's* gold. Further, MOD lawyers confidentially suggested that it might be better to negotiate with a potential salvor and attempt to control an "unfortunate" legal situation, rather than have international

maritime law take its course (this would allow the first salvor who "touched" the wreck to claim the gold).

In 1979, Ministry of Defence officials were also painfully aware that the Barents Sea is a highly sensitive military area and within the Soviet sphere of influence — despite the fact that NATO planes still fly over it. In Whitehall officials argued that a third of the fortune on board the *Edinburgh* belonged to Britain and two-thirds to Russia because Britain and the Russians had jointly insured the gold on a one-third, two-thirds basis. The US government no longer had any interest because their loss claim was met by insurers during the war.

Gradually the British Government moved to a position where the delicate matter of the war grave could be eased to one side.

The Ministry of Defence, in conjunction with the Russians, agreed that via the Salvage Association in London two companies could survey the wreck *on film*. One was Risdon Beazley, the other was the Norwegian firm Stolt-Nielsen working with Keith Jessop.

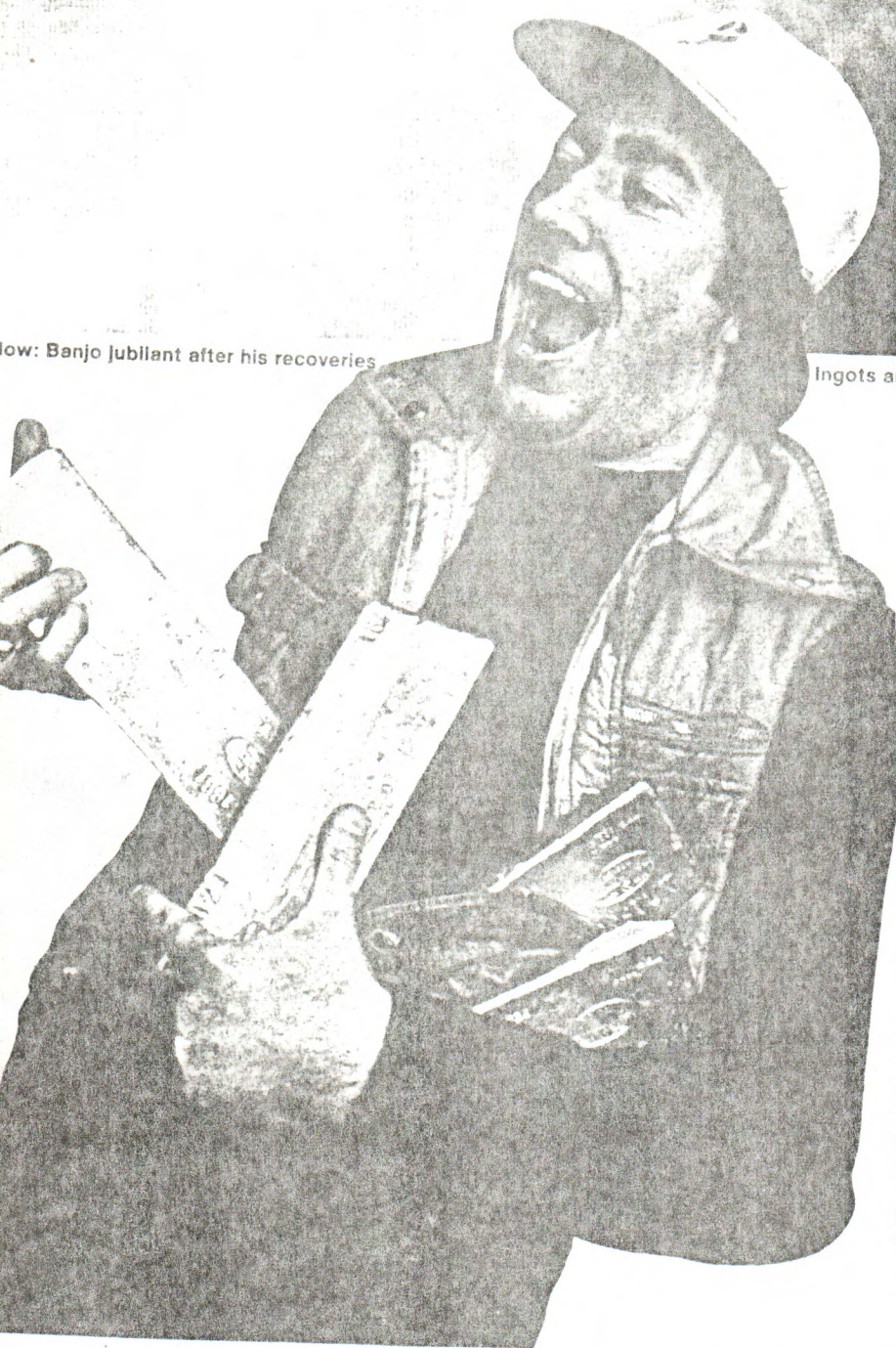
Although Jessop did not need permission to search for a wreck in international waters, however grey, he knew

that East-West politics were almost certain to enter any *Edinburgh* project. Already he was experiencing the hostility of the Edinburgh Survivors' Association, although not every member individually opposed his salvage plan. "I was in a clear-cut situation where we had to recognise that the wreck was a designated war grave and in Russian-claimed waters. And I had to accept," he added, "that two-thirds of the cargo belonged to Moscow and a third to London." And he would have to negotiate his share once the principals had taken their sizeable portion.

FIRMLY believing he was looking for 10 to 10.5 tonnes of bullion, Jessop, in collaboration with Stolt-Nielsens, mounted an expedition to the Barents Sea in October, 1979. "I really did think we knew where to find the *Edinburgh*," he says. "I'd interviewed a British trawler skipper whose nets had been fast in a wreck for more than 18 hours." Jessop claimed that when the trawler skipper had freed his nets he had brought to the surface pieces from a British warship.

Jessop's first search lasted into November that year but without success. Faced with the prospect of worsen-

low: Banjo jubilant after his recoveries



Ingots are passed into the bullion room

ing weather conditions the Yorkshireman and his Norwegian colleagues gave up the hunt — at least for the time being. By the following February Jessop and the Norwegians had parted company, agreeing to continue their search independently.

It was in May last year that he made his move, approaching the large Aberdeen oil diving conglomerate Wharton-Williams. Jessop had worked for Ric Wharton and Malcolm Williams as a North Sea diver. He had also kept in close touch with James Ringrose, a former Royal Navy officer who served under Lieutenant HRH The Prince of Wales in *HMS Bronington*. Jessop had worked alongside Ringrose, a marine surveyor, during their first and unsuccessful expedition. Together they went to Wharton-Williams: they were sure they could find the *Edinburgh*.

"I probably wouldn't have given them even the time to hear such a scheme," admits Malcolm Williams, an ex-army officer. But his more flamboyant partner, Ric Wharton, liked the sheer daring of the idea. "My partner saw them first and heard them out," says Williams. "Suddenly we were involved in a scheme costing millions. But from the beginning Jessop told us the *Edin-*



A jubilant Jessop with the first gold bar

burgh was carrying 10, and not five, tonnes of Russian gold. There's quite a difference."

Jessop also possessed one trump card in his renewed efforts to find and film the *Edinburgh*. Armed with his brand-new and untried £100 (\$166) company, Jessop Marine Recoveries, he emphasised that — unlike his competitors — he would not use explosives once he had found the wreck.

Having won over Wharton-Williams, he emphasised to the authorities that his consortium — consisting of Wharton-Williams, who would provide the divers and their life support teams; Racal-Decca, who would supply sonar and other sophisticated equipment and a German-based shipping line, OSA, who would provide the salvage vessel *Stephaniturm* — would use the latest deep-sea gadgetry. By using a "saturation diving team," he argued, "disturbance of the 'war grave' would be kept to a minimum." They were impressed. For the second time in a year Jessop was granted permission to "find and film" the *Edinburgh*.

In May last year he set sail on board the search vessel *Dammtor*. Two key areas, 24 kilometres apart, were indicated before the *Dammtor* left Scotland, one with a 5 kilometre radius, the other with an 8 kilometre radius. Radio transmitters with 20-metre masts had been placed on the north coast of Norway at Gamvik and Vardo to provide positioning control for the search. The *Edinburgh* wreck was first "spotted" just two hours after full positioning track had been established.

"We went wild," remembers Jessop. "After all that time suddenly I knew exactly where the *Edinburgh* could be

found." A video film made two days later, on May 16, positively identified the cruiser lying on her port side.

When the video film was replayed to government officials and the Russians as unchallengeable proof that he had finally found the *Edinburgh*, they were convinced. The Department of Trade announced that Jessop Marine had been awarded the salvage contract.

THE *Stephaniturm* did not become available to Jessop until the final week of August this year. "My main worry was that the weather would turn and that might stop us diving. If we ran into serious problems on the wreck it might affect the outcome of the whole venture."

While the *Stephaniturm* headed for the Barents Sea in the first week of September, the divers were already being "pressed down" in the ship's compression chambers. "It's like living in a luxurious strait-jacket," explained one diver, "with the advantage that you're well-paid and the 'guards' are at your beck-and-call." In fact, in line with Keith Jessop's philosophy of "no pay, no cure" the divers knew that if they did not recover any gold they would get nothing. If they found the gold, one or two shyly admitted, they would be paid a small fortune, but nobody was saying exactly how much. But estimates indicate that some would earn £1000 (\$1660) a day while in saturation.

Just before mid-day on Thursday, September 3, the salvage vessel arrived at the site of the *Edinburgh* wreck. Once in position, the *Stephaniturm's* computers "fixed" her position with remarkable accuracy, ensuring that the diving bell, once lowered to the sea-bed, did not move. "If the bell should move violently," explained Keith Jessop, "a diver could be torn out of the wreck. Remember, these lads are going down to a world record depth for this kind of saturation salvage."

Early on Friday morning the half-tonne bell, pressurised and with three divers packed inside, was lowered gently through the ship's "moon pool" — a hole in her bottom — to about 13 metres and thus directly over the *Edinburgh*. A video camera, attached to a conical metal frame, had already established that the first ghostly images of the wreck really were of the British cruiser. On the

television monitors in the control shack on the surface one of the torpedo holes, which had helped sink the ship 39 years ago and which the divers hoped would be the quickest route to the bomb room where the gold had been stored, could be clearly seen.

But Barry "Banjo" West, "Legs" Diamond and Brian Cutler soon had "Dive 1" aborted. With their bulky spacemen-like helmets and wearing "soft" suits in which hot water would circulate once they "locked out" of the bell (without it, at those depths in Barents Sea temperatures, they would die in seconds) the three divers found that the bell was too small to allow them to move properly.

After the hitch of "Dive 1," the second team consisted of just two men — Geoff Reudavey and Pete Summers. Reudavey "locked out" from the bell and began to lay out two sonar beacons as an additional "fix" for positioning the salvage vessel over-head. Once that had been done Reudavey was told to make an external survey along the starboard side of the *Edinburgh*.

Being a warship, the cruiser was packed with bombs, shells and other ordnance. The divers, several of whom were ex-Navy and familiar with ammu-



Part of the hull of the wreck cut away by divers to give access to the bomb room

nition and explosives, were urged to act cautiously. "We want to establish whether there's a possible route to one of the bomb room bulkheads," explained Mike O'Meara, the diving superintendent. "Hopefully we can get an idea of the internal condition of the bomb room and whether there is anything we're looking for in there. If we make too hurried decisions we'll end up cutting into the wrong area. We're open for attack on two points: the desecration, which is quite important, and the wasted time involved."

For the first few days the diving bell dropped to the seabed in shifts of eight hours, with the regularity of a tube train. But there were snags, suggesting that the operation might take considerably longer than the three weeks Jessop had originally anticipated.

The control shack's log book tersely catalogues the hitches of those early dives. "Dive 3 — 3.10 diver out ... 3.12 back in the bell — hot water not circulating; 3.25 diver back out; 3.27 back to the bell; (3.25 leak seen on diver heat exchanger); 5.15 pan and tilt (camera) suspected stuck on bell umbilical — not fouled."

There were also some nasty near-accidents. Experienced diver Pete Summers was slightly shocked when he had a "blow back" of oxygen which gave him a bad thump in his chest and a smashed welding visor. Other divers reported "bad headaches and motion sickness" and "slight stomach upsets" during their shifts. Some began to suffer pain from hot water which had seeped through their rubber suits and had scalded their skin.

Gradually the news emerged that three divers had reported severe ear infections — "sea-bed bacteria" the diver's sickness. Before being "pressed down" in the compression chambers divers are given ear drops to prevent ear problems which occur at depth. Such precautions are by no means foolproof. And the moment a diver reports such a problem he stops work and slowly — it can take over a week — he is "brought" to the surface in the decompression chamber. Because such infections spread rapidly an expedition can be ruined if divers fail to report quickly.

A fortnight elapsed, a fortnight in which divers patiently, shift by shift, inched their way into the steel hulk. But still they had not seen any gold. Access to the bomb room through the gaping torpedo hole had not proved possible — if was found to be blocked and unsafe —



Receipts for gold are signed by a Russian Insurance man, Jessop and Keogh of the British Ministry of Defence

and another entry had been cut through an oil tank close to where the gold had been stored. Keith Jessop showed no outward sign of depression.

"I'm starting to get the feel of this thing now," he said. "It's getting near. Everything is going great. When the gold comes on board there's an awful lot to be done with it. We have to clean the bars and photograph them three times each. That's written into the contract. It'll be a hectic time."

Moreover, tension and suspicion sometimes arose, largely because the Russian observers had to ensure that gold bars — out of camera-shot on the sea-bed — were not being stowed secretly on the diving bell. In the tiny control shack tempers at times became explosive.

In fact, tempers and morale rose and fell as rapidly as had the *Stephaniturm's* barometer. But when the first relic from the *Edinburgh* was hauled out of the icy waters it lifted spirits remarkably, despite being just an oil-splashed, jagged piece of steel plate.

Meanwhile, John Clarke, the ship's project manager and an ex-Royal Navy marine surveyor, expressed delight that they had correctly pinpointed the position on the *Edinburgh's* hull to start cutting with the burners.

David Keene, a diving supervisor, admitted that diving at 267 metres and moving heavy debris, including ordnance, was tiring the divers faster than in the North Sea. When the divers reached the bomb room their problems were compounded by the discovery of bombs, shells and other ammunition.

Some of the ordnance found on the *Edinburgh* was brought to the surface to be defused by Dr Sidney Alford, who described himself as a scientist, but

shyly admitted to Ministry of Defence connections.

"That ordnance which had not been affected by the sea water," he explained, "must be regarded as sensitive as when it was first issued 40 years ago. Naturally I treat all such material with caution and so do the divers, I trust."

Dr. Alford stacked World War II Oerlikon shells, .303 ammunition and a variety of bomb-ware in a blue-painted container-cum-store on the stern of the salvage vessel. At night the ordnance expert, who played a penny whistle and Scrabble, and spoke Japanese fluently, refused to elaborate on the work he was doing on board during the day. "I can't say *exactly* why I'm here, but all will emerge in good time," he told people on the ship. Although the two

Russian observers and Keith Jessop said they had no idea why he was on the *Stephaniturm*, the British Government representative, David Keogh, admitted that he had been briefed. So, too, had divers working on the wreck below.

Keith Jessop was contractually bound to film the entire gold-lifting operation, partly to ensure that the war grave was treated with respect. A complete film record of work on the sea-bed and the surface — with copies for both the Russian and British governments — was also seen as a guarantee that the salvage contract would be fully honored.

With \$76 million in gold bars at stake it also gave the salvor, and the two governments, some additional security precautions 267 metres down. "Filming will also help the divers and people working on the surface," said Jessop. "Ironically, we can see more on the television monitors on board than the divers sometimes can."

But even before the *Stephaniturm* had left Peterhead in August there had been disquiet within the consortium that three journalists, as well as two Russians and British official David Keogh, would be observing the entire operation.

Keogh claimed that he had not expected the Press to be present during the venture and before sailing from Peterhead, Department of Trade official Stanley Holness and Salvage Association spokesman John Jackson expressed surprise that *The Sunday Times* wished to report the operation week by week. "We understood that articles would be written only when the cargo had been recovered," said Jackson. "We want any articles vetted."

Shortly after leaving Peterhead for

the Barents Sea, project manager Clarke refused permission for the three journalists to take calls from their offices.

After lengthy discussions, Clarke and Stewart agreed that articles "strictly vetted" could leave the vessel, a condition also demanded by Keogh. For the remainder of the voyage articles were censored, and on one occasion an article was banned from leaving the vessel. This dealt with the unfortunate and unseemly way some human remains on the wreck had been treated.

In fact, before the sailing from Peterhead, British Government officials stressed that they did not expect to find any human remains in the wreck.

But on video film sent from the seabed, and seen on the ship's TV monitors, a femur could be seen floating with other debris. Divers, too, some inadvertently in the murkiness, some perhaps intentionally, sent bones to the surface in the metal cages which also brought up gold bars. "The vast torpedo hole can only make one remember how these men died," explained a young British diver. "Several of us are pretty disgusted at what happened. It has tarnished a highly successful operation."

In one incident in the bomb room, human remains, including skulls, one with a large hole at the back of the cranium, were arranged — some with chemical lights in them — to startle the next diver down. In another incident, witnessed by several people, including *Sunday Times* photographer Ian Yeomans, some human remains, including a femur, were tossed somewhat casually into the sea without any ceremony. "I don't know why I behaved in such a silly way," explained Dr Sidney Alford, the scientist.

After pressure from other people on board, including the journalists, the incident was officially noted in the log book and a service conducted on the stern by government official Keogh. Remains were placed on a wooden board, covered by a Union Jack, and then slowly despatched back into the icy Arctic waters. "One had to put matters right," explained Keogh, who was also representing the War Graves Commission.

From inquiries made on the ship, and later on shore, it appears that Wharton-Williams were also anxious that observers on board, including the Russians, did not become aware that the *Stepaniturm* was carrying explosives and that they were for possible use on the wreck. Moreover, from discussions

with the diving team it emerged that Dr Alford was a well-known explosives expert in the North Sea, while Alford himself claimed that he worked for the Ministry of Defence, sometimes through a security company.

He eventually admitted that he had bought \$3380-worth of explosives a few days before the *Stephaniturm* left Scotland. "I was told the job was very secret and that my presence was not to be known until we had left Peterhead. Even other members of the consortium on board did not necessarily know who I was or why I was there."

On board the *Stephaniturm* Keogh said: "The charges were prepared because it was discovered that there were bombs near where the bullion was stacked. There could have been a build-



The Russians throw a champagne party for divers and crew in a Murmansk hotel after the share-out

up of gas and that could have led to divers being killed. Getting into the bomb room with shaped charges would have been safer than cutting. In fact none were used."

James Ringrose, operations director of Jessop Marine, said later in Aberdeen: "We were absolutely horrified to learn that explosives had apparently been taken on board — along with an expert who had been employed to place them on the wreck should the need have arisen. In my view this was not only dangerous, but could have affected the outcome of the venture." In fact, Jessop Marine later confirmed that they had written assurances from Wharton-Williams that no attempt would be made to use explosives.

BY 'DIVE 27' on Wednesday, September 16, it was considered safe enough for men to work in the bomb room. There, where the gold was be-

lieved to lie in rough wooden boxes marked in Cyrillic, John Rossier, a 28-year-old Mexican-moustached diver from Zimbabwe, was loading a metal basket. By 10.30 the *Stephaniturm* moved four metres starboard to allow its 40-tonne crane to bring the basket to the surface. Seven minutes later diving supervisor Dave Keene in the control shack told the bridge to move the ship four metres to port.

I was playing Scrabble with *Sunday Times* photographer Ian Yeomans when over the "squawk box" linked to the control room we heard Rossier scream "I've found the gold! I've found the gold!" Rossier had been lifting small bits of metal into an empty basket when his hand felt the heavy slab of gold. The log book records the time 10.48 and the larger-than-usual scrawl: "FOUND ONE GOLD BAR."

On the surface duty supervisor Dave Keene signed his name in the log book at the entry spelling out gold in bold letters. A message to Keith Jessop, asleep in his cabin, was sent from the control shack. When he came down from the upper deck he had no idea why he had been roused. Uncharacteristically, he said nothing for two or three minutes.

The ship went into pandemonium with men, including German crew members, whooping and laughing with excitement.

By now the gold ingot, shining in Rossier's hands, had been identified as number KPO620, and checked against the official receipt which Captain Hugh Faulkner of the

Edinburgh had signed for in Murmansk on April 25, 1942. Rossier then put the gold — worth some \$169,000 — in a specially-built metal cage, watching as a crane winched it carefully upwards to the surface.

We looked over the guardrail as the cage emerged from the water, and in the strong light of the arc-lamps, we too could now examine KPO620, sitting among debris. "Come on," shouted someone, "give it to Keith." Jessop, hesitating at first, moved towards the cage as it was swung on the deck and watched Mike O'Meara grab the solitary gold bar. Looking dazed, and still almost speechless, he took KPO620 in his hands, forgetting what a dead weight gold can be in bulk. "God, it's heavy," he said, turning to observers Ig r Ilin and Leonid Melodinsky. "A historic moment," said Ilin.

Jessop began carrying KPO620 around the ship like a footballer who

had won the cup final. An hour later in the packed mess room each member of the crew was photographed on a Polaroid camera, clutching the heavy bar. Off-duty divers in the compression chambers had to make do with a glimpse of KPO620 through their tiny portholes.

By midnight Jessop's first bar of Russian gold had been cleaned and entered as "Number One" on a fresh inventory agreed beforehand by the British and Russian representatives on board. Before the bar was locked away Dave Keene sighed and added: "I've got £100,000 (\$169,000) in my hands. It looks heavy but it feels beautiful." Keith Jessop had now got into a mood that verged on gold fever. "Happy?" he said. "Who wouldn't be! What can I say?"

The Russians, too, expressed delight but in a more restrained manner. After having their picture taken with the first gold bar they talked about the rest of the bullion waiting to be picked out of the debris and hauled to the surface. If the operation was successful, Moscow's State Bank stood to gain millions in hard currency. Just how seriously the Russians took their interest in the bullion could be judged by the Russian vessels which had anchored a short distance away from the *Stephaniturm*. The two ships — the *Muzena* and the *Elton* — were described by the Russians on board as fishing protection vessels. "Auxiliary intelligence gatherers, AIGs," said ex-Navy diver Mike O'Meara. "We know what they are."

Meanwhile gold bars were becoming commonplace in the El Dorado-like atmosphere of the bomb room, deep inside the *Edinburgh*. Before "Dive 27" had finished Dougald Mathison, who had taken over from Rossier back in the bell, was finding gold wherever he looked — or felt. At one stage of Mathison's shift the log book reads: "04.20 diver back down in the bomb room. 04.28 Diver has one gold bar. 04.29 Diver has two gold bars. 04.32 diver has four gold bars. 04.40 diver has five gold bars." And so it continued with, on one occasion, £4 million (\$6.6 million) in gold coming up in the metal cage.

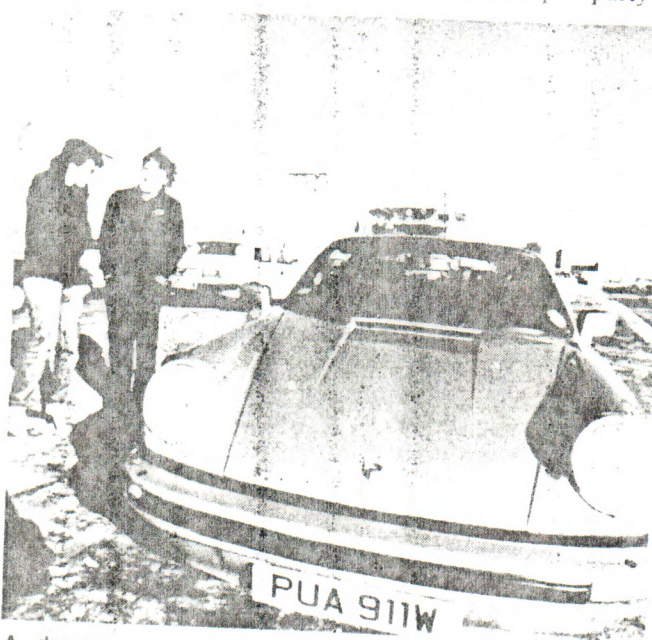
Progress through the final days of September was relatively slow. "*Edinburgh* is a tough ship," said the ebullient, ever-confident Keith Jessop.

By the beginning of October — exactly one month after the *Stephaniturm* had begun operations — a Force 11 storm had pushed the ship from its fixed position in the Barents Sea. For 48 hours we

had to ride out the storm before the divers were able to return to find the 79 missing gold bars. Already the makeshift bullion room on board contained nearly \$68 million. But with tons of debris still to be cleared, exhausted divers and worsening weather, the prospect of recovering every last bar began to fade.

Dave Keene, the diving supervisor, no longer disguised his concern. "They're exhausted," said Keene. "They've been working throughout at record depths in terrible conditions. They need fresh air to bring them back to their peak — and rest. But we're running out of time." The operation was also running out of fit divers. And there were more ear infections.

On Wednesday, October 7, Jessop



A dream come true: a Porsche awaits Jessop as the *Stephaniturm* returns to Peterhead

and the consortium decided everybody had had enough. He had recovered 431 ingots.

It was on the way to Murmansk that the two Russians discovered Sidney Alford's cache of hidden explosives. They demanded it be dumped overboard before reaching port. John Clarke ordered the *Stephaniturm* to stop at night on its 20-hour journey and agreed that Alford could detonate an explosive charge on the sea bottom when the salvage vessel was well inside Russian territorial waters — an area not far from the Kola Inlet frequented by Russian submarines.

But the Russians spotted Alford lowering the explosives and a detonator wrapped in a blue plastic bag. He wanted to see how his device "behaved" at a great depth. After officially complaining — to Keogh — Russian officials had the bizarre experiment aborted.

Despite the odd behaviour, a strong

force of Russian officials, obviously delighted at the operation's success, greeted our arrival on the quayside. Nearby, a number of soldiers in green and khaki uniforms, looked out from an old-fashioned railway carriage. Close to the carriage, which was to carry the Russian \$25 million plus share of the gold to Moscow, were further knots of armed soldiers.

While the large group of Russian officials waited for their first glimpse of the gold, the Russian observers looked on anxiously. David Keogh, along with two officials from the British Embassy in Moscow, stepped forward to unlock the bullion room. He smiled. The key would not turn in the lock. Gradually his smile disappeared. The Russian party looked uneasy. Above the scene

stood a group of laughing divers, their cameras clicking. One of them had squeezed superglue into the key-hole and Keogh and the Russians could not reach the gold for almost half an hour.

Later that evening at Murmansk's leading hotel, British and Russian officials, and a few of the diving team, sat down for endless toasts in vodka and Russian champagne.

Nearby, at the Seamen's Mission, divers and ship's crew sat down to drink vodka and beer and choose free books or play ping-pong. But foreigners, even those bearing gold gifts, are not permitted to wander around Murmansk after midnight. And so the *Stephaniturm* sailed for Britain the following afternoon, still carrying a third of a fortune in bullion, as well as the two Russian observers, Ilin and Melodinsky.

"We must inspect the compression chamber once the divers come out of saturation," explained one rather shamefacedly. "Only a formality, of course." In fact, it was in case any of the divers had decided to "liberate" one of the gold bars.

Back in the relative normality, and the job a brilliant success, the divers celebrated with a ribald vengeance. The two reserved Russian officials stared in total disbelief as the British Government representative was filmed being really debagged.

"Oh, the lads like letting their hair down when the job is over," said a still-beaming Keith Jessop. "They'll be back next year for the remaining millions. And there's plenty more rich wrecks I'll be chasing, too," he added.

On the quayside his silver Porsche was waiting. □

South Pacific Divers - January/February, 1982.

It seems our divers have come down with some rare disease.

The symptoms are:

They don't dive, or if they do,

They are illiterate and also can't write, or

The dive is so secret that even they can't remember it.

The cure for this disease is for those who dive or do anything else, write it down, make a story and send it in - everyone will enjoy each other's adventures.

All correspondence to: 37 Weber Cres. Emerton. 2770.

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SOUTH PACIFIC DIVERS CLUB MEETS EVERY THIRD MONDAY OF THE MONTH AT BANKSTOWN SPORTS CLUB AT 8.00 P.M. Visitors always welcome.

Club Meetings are held on the following dates in 1982:

January	18
February	15
March	15
April	19
May	17
June	21
July	19
August	16
September	20
October	18
November	15
December (If needed)	

S.P.D. IN DAYS GONE BY

Club Meeting: 17th Nov.

Small meeting owing to a large number of members being at the convention at Heron Island.

Slides shown by Lindsay Ditchburn and John Jansens.

PAST ACTIVITIES:

26th October: Club dive to Bass Point.

16th November:

Jervis Bay. The trawler was not available owing to bad weather (?), so members took the alternative of a wild ride down the Kangaroo Valley River. This was pretty swollen and flowing at about six knots over plenty of rapids with everyone getting cringled in some way – pranging into trees, rocks, branches, Lindsay and so on. Stars of the day were Lindsay who had a bad day after losing one of his giants, being frightened by a little brown snake who decided to swim with him, and finally getting a sore foot!!! Rick Latimer must have hit his nut or something as he went back to childhood and tried to bury everyone in mud.

Another guy to make headlines is Norm Rogers – our Safety officer. Demonstrating his proven abilities in this field, he lashed his body beautiful to a tractor tube and crashed down the river clearing everyone and everything in his path.

Now to the serious side! Norm has finally been caught – by Jan, and has announced his forthcoming marriage – as soon as he pays his speeding fine as he was "got at" on Mt. Ousley. Also, Lloyd II (Peter C.) and Helen have announced their engagement – I suppose it happens to us all – anyway congratulations Norm, Jan, Peter and Helen.

It seems the "mag." goes to the U.S. as Denis received a card from Peter Harper saying that he is still following our activities. Peter has been diving on a few little wrecks over there – ANDRE DORIA etc. and is now off to Florida for a dive. Man, are we jealous!

John Luton now has returned from New Guinea and is at present Ab diving at Eden again.

DES. HENNESSY

Taken from Australian Skindivers Magazine January/February, 1970.