



Nautilus Lifeline GPS/VHF Radios

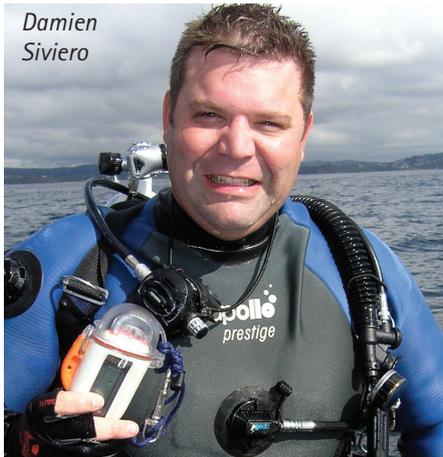
It has been the experience of your correspondent, and that of many others in the past, that safety in diving doesn't sell. Just as car buyers offered the choice between an entertainment system or more airbags will choose the former, divers are just the same. They know bad things will never happen to them so have no inclination to spend on emergency safety gear. One of diving's great risks is being swept away. As one old hand observed 'In a current you're like a leaf in the sea'. And if it's a bad day and seas are up and the current's running things rapidly get very hairy. Recently four of us went out on a less than perfect day to dive a wreck about half a mile offshore in 51 metres. Breeze was 15 knots gusting 18 and blowing from the shore, current about one knot heading south. The other three were all breather divers and planning to spend 30-40 minutes on the bottom with a run-time of roughly 1hr 40 min total. I was going to dive open circuit for a lesser bottom time but, looking at the wind, sea state and current, opted to boat for the others. Two had scooters. One, let's call him Jeff, scooted away from the wreck after a short time on the bottom, and realising he was lost did a blue-water bag-ascent. His irresponsible mates carried on their original plan, disregarding the disappearance of their erstwhile buddy.

The wind speed picked up to 25 knots, gusting 30 plus with the sea state deteriorating. Jeff surfaces way down current after a bag deco, his safety sausage blows flat in the breeze and his scooter is only powerful enough to hold station in the current, not to make headway back towards the boat and I'm not keeping a sharp lookout this early in the dive plan.

He's smart enough to know he's in trouble and cool enough to look for assistance. By now the deteriorating conditions send recreational fishos in their runabouts back to shelter. Two pass by in Jeff's vicinity but are oblivious to his efforts to attract them. The third almost runs him over before he sees Jeff and stops to take him on board. Meanwhile I know nothing. I see from my chartplotter the other two miscreants have pulled the anchor so I lay out a sea-anchor to stop a drift to New Zealand while these guys do their hour long deco. First one back on board has the temerity to ask 'Where's Jeff?' I think his ears are still ringing from the abuse I heaped on him for not aborting the dive when one of the party disappeared. Then the search was on. Sixty minutes of pounding through heavy seas, working out how far a diver would have drifted in an hour and a half, searching likely drift patterns and half expecting to find a body. I had alerted Marine Rescue earlier, first of all

with a heads-up when the divers were down and the weather was going bad and then again when the search started. Our stress ended on getting a VHF call from Rescue to say our missing diver was on the boat-ramp jetty back in Botany Bay. He alighted from his rescuer's boat just as the Marine search vessel was preparing to leave the same jetty to look for him.

All three of these characters, having learned a first-hand lesson of how bad things can get when conditions turn nasty, went out the same day and bought a Nautilus Lifeline submersible GPS/VHF radios, with two others



Damien Siviero

of my regular diving mates following their example. Nothing like a bit of sphincter puckering to bring reality home and to encourage investing in a life saving device.

Did The Portuguese Discover Australia?

An antique bronze gun found buried on a Northern Territory beach may give life to theories the Portuguese were the first Europeans to land on Australia. Young Christopher Doukas found the gun buried in mud on Dundee Beach near Darwin. The gun has all the characteristics of a 16th century Portuguese swivel gun. It is thought the gun may have been lost or left by seafarer Christovao de Medonca during voyages he is said to have made around northern Australia in 1521 and 1522. Portugal occupied Timor from 1515 to 1975 and Australia is only 700 km away so it's highly likely their seafarers sailed to Australia to be the first European visitors, preceding Dutchman Willem Janszoon on Cape York in 1606.

Pearse Resurgence 2012

Six Aussie cave divers who call themselves The Wet Mules re-visited New Zealand's South Island in January to further explore the Pearse Resurgence. With assistance from the Nelson Speleological Group doing dye-tracing it was confirmed that there was no shallow connection between Pearse and the Nettlebed caves, only a suspected passage deeper than 120 metres. Habitats for deco were installed in the Pearse at

7, 16, 28 and 38 metres. Two divers did the first excursion to 180 metres with a seven hour, all in water decompression. Later dives by others in the party extended the depths using scooters and ran lines to (respectively) 194, 207 and 221 metres. The latter dive took a run time of 17 hours, the ordeal of this ameliorated somewhat by use of the habitats for decompression and surface-supplied heating systems. Even at 221 metres the Resurgence continued beyond, heading deeper. A very fine achievement and some outstanding hazardous deep diving.

Port Phillip Heads Diver Rescue

'We had a roaring ebb tide and a 30 knot sou-easterly wind creating a washing machine sea while six exhausted divers drifted outside the Heads'. So said one of the rescuers of the stricken divers. When the huge Port Phillip Bay empties or fills through its narrow heads the ensuing rip is extremely rough and notoriously famous. And when a near gale blows across it's no place to be for man, boat or beast let alone six drifting divers. Their plight started when their boat lost power and was blown on to a rocky reef. Its female diver-driver radioed for help to rescue the boat from the reef and to retrieve the drifters. Melbourne is blessed with a plethora of rescue services and in no time a pilot boat, helicopters from the Police Air Wing, Coastguard and the water police mounted a rescue. Fortuitously the pilot boat was in the vicinity moving through the Heads and was quick to the divers, dragging them to safety. Lucky for them as they were all exhausted and without prompt rescue the outcome could have been tragic. Other services retrieved the dive boat from the reef and made it seaworthy again. A Port Phillips Sea Pilots spokesman was critical of the actions of the divers saying conditions were too dangerous for diving.

180 Year-old Shipwreck Found

Divers found the remains of a 180 year-old shipwreck 450 km off the coast at Gladstone Queensland. For a fortnight the searchers, organised by the Australian National Maritime Museum, scoured the ocean floor for the wreck of the *Royal Charlotte*. The ship was a convict and troop transporter, en route to India with a contingent of soldiers when it sank in a gale on Frederick Reef in 1825. Survivors were marooned on a sand cay for six weeks until they were rescued by a government brig. Among the remains divers found timber, an anchor, a cannon and other items. Archaeologists are delighted with the find and say it will offer insights into convict transportation in the 19th century. But they always say that. 