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Close encounters of a friendly kind

By SIMON BEVILACQUA

12feb06

STEVEN Spielberg shocked the world with his 1977 blockbuster film Close Encounters of the Third Kind.

Fresh from scaring his audience senseless with his classic fear-flick Jaws, the film-maker turned his attention to aliens.

The first kind of alien encounter, Spielberg told us, was a UFO sighting. The second kind was physical evidence of a landing.

The third -- and the focus of the movie -- was contact.

An alien mothership arrives on Earth and an alien civilisation arrives uninvited on our home planet.

The movie, promoted with the slogan "We Are Not Alone", scared the hell out of a generation.

More than 200 years ago, Tasmania was the scene of an officially documented close encounter with an alien race.

And on this day in 1793, a brave Tasmanian Aborigine took up an invitation to board an alien ship.

Mara, who lived near Recherche Bay in the state's far south, met French expeditioners anchored off-shore, not far from Cockle Creek.

Far south Tasmanians had not had prolonged "encounters of the third kind" with the alien Europeans before.

Abel Tasman's 1642 sail-by was probably an encounter of the first kind.

Cook, Bligh and other explorers also had brief encounters of the first, second and third kind.

But this meeting, in the summer of 1793, was prolonged, intimate and, most impressively, friendly.

The Aborigines had watched from a distance when the Bruny d'Entrecasteaux expedition anchored in Recherche Bay for a couple of weeks the previous year.

When the French returned in February 1793, the Tasmanians were ready to meet.

French navy sub-lieutenant Jacques-Malo La Motte du Portail wrote about the meetings in his journal.

The Frenchman describes meeting 48 naked Aborigines, including 10 men, 14 women and 24 children.

Occasionally Aboriginal women wore kangaroo skins over the shoulders but La Motte du Portail believed the furs were carried to sit on.

Some Aboriginal men were bearded and had long curly hair worn in dreadlocks smeared with red ochre and fat.

Some had strips of kangaroo skin and shells as adornment around their heads. Others had black charcoal on their faces.

The Frenchman was astonished by the peaceful, open way he was welcomed.

The Aborigines were unarmed but did not expect the French to drop their weapons.

"Was it because they did not understand the terrible effect of our guns, whose firing they had heard?" La Motte du Portail wrote.

But the Frenchman believed the Tasmanians were inherently peaceful and friendly.

"The kindness and gentleness which seemed to be the basis of their character gave to our meetings rather the air of a reunion of friends than a meeting of individuals who were quite different in every way.

"This happy disposition on their part proved wholly advantageous in regard to the observations we wished to make," he wrote.

"This people, undoubtedly the closest to the primitive state of nature, seemed to enjoy all the good fortune associated with it. Only warfare could disturb the peaceful sameness of their days, and nothing shows that they could be used to it, everything seeming to prove the contrary.

"A warlike people in the habit of fighting with their neighbours, on seeing people as extraordinary as the Europeans, would not fail to come armed and on the defensive. These people had done nothing of the kind; from our first meeting there had been a basis for confidence which they had always maintained."

La Motte du Portail found the women beautiful but not pretty. They seemed self-conscious and young girls covered their breasts in his presence.

The women exhausted themselves caring for the men and children and treated their young with gentleness. The women dived, with wooden knives in their mouths and woven baskets in hand, for abalone and crayfish.

"Each one lights a fire and around it gather her family, and there she proceeds to lay out her catch," he wrote.

Abalone and crayfish were cooked on the fire; the women used fingers to judge when cooked.

"They serve the children before the husband," La Motte du Portail noted.

He was "curious to taste the shellfish cooked in such a simple way". He was "extremely surprised to find it tender as well". The French could not cook the abalone tender.

"... one is obliged to leave it for several days, pound it sometimes and often, and in spite of all that, one does not attain the tenderness."

La Motte du Portail wondered whether Tasmanians used a different type of abalone or had a knack.

The Aborigines also ate a local seaweed, lightly cooked. They added the fruit of a local plant to the crayfish and abalone.

The Aborigines, however, would not eat French food.

La Motte Du Portail tried to give Aboriginal children sweets.

"I gave the children some pieces of sugar candy to suck, which they took with much pleasure and their mothers had to take from their mouths, being careful afterwards to put in a finger so as to make sure none remained," he said.

The Frenchman was disgusted by Aboriginal men picking lice out of the hair of the children and eating them.

"They crunch them between their teeth in such a way as to lead one to believe it is for them a great banquet," he said.

French parties took stag skins, hatchets, saws, glass beads and red, white and blue cloth to give to the Aborigines.

A French longboat took two boatloads of expeditioners to visit the Tasmanians.

They invited the Aborigines to come back to their two boats, Recherche and Esperance.

One bold man took the offer.

"One of them named Mara was taken on board the Recherche," La Motte du Portail wrote.

La Motte du Portail said Mara spent hours aboard, including in d'Entrecasteaux's cabin, and was delighted when given a rooster.

Another crewman aboard the Recherche described the historic occasion.

"One of them willingly went aboard the frigate and he was astonished at much of what he saw," he wrote.

"It was a natural astonishment in which there was not stupidity, great intelligence being shown even in small matters. There was much finesse shown. It was a very happy occasion."



[ABC Online](#)

Sentencing postponed for abalone poacher. 09/02/2006. ABC News Online

[This is the print version of story <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200602/s1566246.htm>]

Last Update: Thursday, February 9, 2006. 3:24pm (AEDT)

Sentencing postponed for abalone poacher

An abalone poacher who took a commercial quantity of abalone in South Gippsland has been remanded in custody and has had his sentencing postponed.

Shane Christopher Degelder, 49, of Mentone, was caught with almost 30 kilos of abalone meat worth \$4,000.

The court heard fisheries officers were watching Degelder when he went diving for the abalone about 2:00am AEDT on October 19, 2004.

They set up a road block, but Degelder tried to drive around it.

He was caught with a car full of wet diving gear and two bags of abalone were found by the side of the road near the roadblock.

The case is the first in Victoria since the introduction of new laws making abalone poaching an indictable offence.

Degelder will return to court next Wednesday.

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Six held for abalone dealing in Cape

Six men, among them a Chinese national, were arrested for illegal dealing in perlemoen (abalone) worth about R2,5-million, Western Cape police said on Thursday.

Captain Elliot Sinyangana said the suspects, aged between 18 and 45, were arrested on a Stellenbosch farm on Wednesday after being under police observation for some time.

Eleven freezers containing 2,2 tons of perlemoen were confiscated. The haul was taken to Marine and Coastal Management for storage.

The six men were detained at Stellenbosch police station and would appear in court next week, Sinyangana said. - Sapa

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Diver Peter Riddle shows an abalone measuring tool on a boat owned by Len McCall (left) of Port Fairy.
Picture: GLEN WATSON

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Abalone strategy leads the world

By LIZ MCKINNON
February 7, 2006

THE south-west coastline's lucrative abalone stocks face extinction if people continued to take "one size fits all" legal size limits, according to a Western Abalone Divers Association member.

Port Fairy's Len McCall said before the development of a fine-scale management system the industry's future was under threat.

The association has devised a sustainable management plan which is one of three finalists in the \$10,000 Hugh McKay Innovators Award. With the support of the association, leading abalone expert Dr Jeremy Price researched each zone during the past three years.

A key finding in the work had been the discovery that when an abalone reaches the legal minimum size it might still be several years before it reaches full maturity and capable of breeding efficiently.

"Abalone grow at different rates. The problem is some were being taken before they reached maturity," Mr McCall said. Dr Price's findings led to the previous legal size limit of 120mm being increased to 123mm and up to 140mm across the management zone.

It has also closed four areas, including Port Fairy's Passage, where stocks were largely juvenile.

Levys Point, Warrnambool, is now subject to a 140mm limit, up from 120mm.

Mr McCall said the new plan had been enforced by the fisheries department.

“It appears this may be taken up by other states. New South Wales and South Australia have shown interest and further workshops are to be held in Western Australia,” Mr McCall said.

The veteran diver will present the system to an international abalone seminar in Chile this month.

“Most other management models across the world have collapsed,” Mr McCall said.

“It will take lifetimes to rebuild stocks.”

Australia provides half of the world's abalone supply. Mr McCall said Fisheries Officers were heavily patrolling the coast. He said if the association won the award, the prizemoney would be spent on research.

This story was found at: <http://the.standard.net.au/articles/2006/02/07/1139074198299.html>



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Diver plot confession

By GAVIN LOWER
Law Reporter
02feb06

AN abalone diver and quota unit holder pleaded guilty to conspiracy yesterday.

Peter Norman Frost, 52, of Flinders Island admitted to falsifying abalone dive documents between 1999 and 2002.

Frost is one of only five divers to hold quota units known as Furneaux units.

They relate to units granted to divers working in the Furneaux group of islands after their fishery was opened up to other divers.

Rules on the units mean only the diver who owns them can dive for and collect abalone recorded on that unit.

But the Supreme Court in Hobart heard yesterday that Frost recorded abalone caught by other divers on documentation relating to his Furneaux units.

Crown prosecutor Daryl Coates, SC, told the court five other divers had caught abalone which was listed on Frost's paperwork.

They have all pleaded guilty to charges relating to the case and been dealt with by the courts.

Mr Coates said a total of 8183kg of abalone was caught by other divers and included on Frost's documents for which he received \$374,447.

Mr Coates said the case was not about poaching because the abalone caught was part of what authorities had allowed to be caught.

Frost's lawyer, Gary Hevey, said his client was not someone who had become too rich, ill or uninterested to dive.

"He is a man who does get wet and continues to get wet now to fish on these units," Mr Hevey told the court.

He said Frost was charged 3-1/2 years ago and had continued diving in that time without breaking the law. He had been diving for abalone since the 1970s.

Mr Hevey urged Justice Shan Tennent to suspend any term if she was considering imposing a jail sentence.

He said Frost had provided a cheque for \$287,094 to cover any pecuniary penalty imposed.

The case was adjourned to February 21 for sentencing.



English.eastday.com

Compiled by

Of nests, sharks and lazy fish

13/1/2006 9:59

Douglas Williams/Shanghai Daily news

It has been brought to our attention here that there is something of a lack of Chinese restaurants being written about in these pages.

In an attempt to rectify the situation, this week we take a look at the Rendezvous Hotel's very fine Straits restaurant and some of the exquisite dishes being cooked up by Executive Chef Michael Ho and his team.

The four-star, 32-floor, 342-bedroom Rendezvous is to be found on the North side of Yan'an Road W., between the junction with Wulumuqi Road and Zhenning Road.

The Straits restaurant is on the fifth floor, Tony Quek, food and beverage manager, describes the menu as 70 percent Chinese, 30 percent western.

Shanghai daily was treated to an eight-course tour de force of Ho's extensive repertoire and in the process was reminded just what a sublime dining experience fine Chinese cuisine makes for.

A combination platter teed off proceedings with jelly fish, eel, beef and chicken all surrounding a round of marinated winter bamboo shoot wrapped in bamboo sheet.

These were morsels and acted as quality amusement for the mouth in a sincere, non-pretentious way.

Birds' nest soup is so named because it is a soup made from birds' nests. These nests are not of the common or garden variety, twigs do not figure. A tiny swift-like bird found in Indonesia and parts of India has a cunning trick whereby it somehow turns its saliva into a nest.

Chinese chefs use the nests as a thickening agent in a similar way that other chefs use corn flour except that, unlike corn flour, the nests reputedly increase longevity. Alas, this particular potage didn't figure in my lunch although it is available in the Straits restaurant.

Shark fin soup did figure. As I write, it's "special" properties are yet to make themselves known, perhaps later. It was tasty in a chicken flavored type way, although my conscience is still smarting.

Abalone comes with no conscience nibbling extras and no "special" properties, but it is equipped with bundles of taste and a totally unique texture. This was served with sea cucumber and oyster sauce.

Ho's trick with the Australian abalone is to create the oyster sauce that it is served with in the same long process as the cooking of the abalone itself. Usually, this is done separately.

Abalone, in my book, is now right up there with lobster and queenie scallops at the top of the league table of savory things to eat.

The baked Soon Hock, a Vietnamese fish also known as lazy fish, was excellent as were the fried scallops with asparagus.

The Straits restaurant provides a peaceful, spacious and relaxed dining area, with two private rooms.

It's an ideal place to enjoy a long lazy lunch or dinner with friends or family. The menu is extensive but not of the intimidatingly, encyclopedic nature.

Address: 396 Yanan Road W.

Tel: 6249-5588

Divers haul out 120 poachers
11/01/2006 15:23 - (SA)

Johannesburg - Navy divers hauled 120 suspected perlemoen (abalone) poachers from the sea between Cape Recife and Sardinia Bay near Port Elizabeth on Tuesday.

"This was part of our highly visible policing. Whenever divers wanted to go into the sea, we sent out navy divers with them," environmental affairs department spokesperson Abeeda Mugjenkar said on Wednesday.

The removal of suspects from the water followed the arrest last week of twelve people caught poaching.

On Tuesday, the navy divers found 176 shucked perlemoen stashed in the water.

"Our primary goal is to make sure that the abalone does not get out of the water," Mugjenkar said.

Visible policing

According to Mugjenkar, poaching strategies were changing. Poachers were diving closer to shore rather than using rubber ducks to dive from further out to sea.

The department's assistant director of environmental protection, Keith Govender, said the department was having a "huge success rate" with their visible policing in the Port Elizabeth area.

The protection units had been mandated to restrict poaching, and that was why the 120 suspected poachers were evicted from the water.

"We cannot arrest them when we can't find anything on them," he said.

However, Govender said he knew that poachers were hiding shucked perlemoen on the sea bed and returning to retrieve them when "nobody was around".

"We are frustrating them. It is good. We will win the battle to protect our marine resources," he said.

Govender said the "red and white ships you see around PE" were part of the department's environmental strategy.

Four poachers were arrested on Friday at Willows and Schoenmakerskop, and 391 shucked perlemoen were confiscated. On Thursday, eight poachers were arrested at Cape Recife and 729 shucked perlemoen were confiscated.

Smal said there were "a lot of local groups here poaching".

They liked to take the perlemoen out of their shells because that made them easier to transport.

"They weigh less shucked," he said.

Smal said the poachers had all appeared in court.

-- Top stories in this category --



ABC Rural

Agribusiness confidence high

Tuesday, 10/01/2006

Abalone, teak, plums and mangoes are being tipped as good investments for share portfolios this year.

Investor dollars are flowing into agribusiness ventures around the country, although the industry says it will be a few years before most investors make a profit.

The Australian Agribusiness Group's Tim Lee says with \$600 million ploughed into the sector annually, confidence is booming.

"[There has] certainly been a lot of cash come into the industry in the last few years," Mr Lee said.

"I think the proof will be in the pudding but that's not going to be for a few years yet.

"Agribusiness in the long term will be an area of investment where people need to focus. It's not going to be all of you portfolio. It's going to be somewhere in the order of 10 to 15 per cent of an investment portfolio, but an important one."

But John Curry from the Australian Shareholders Association says investors should be cautious.

"I would doubt that they would be part of a normal person's share portfolio," he said.

"There are so many areas in Australia where agriculture has been tried and failed. It goes through cycles. There have been some disasters and who knows where the tax position might lie over a number of years ahead."

National Rural News