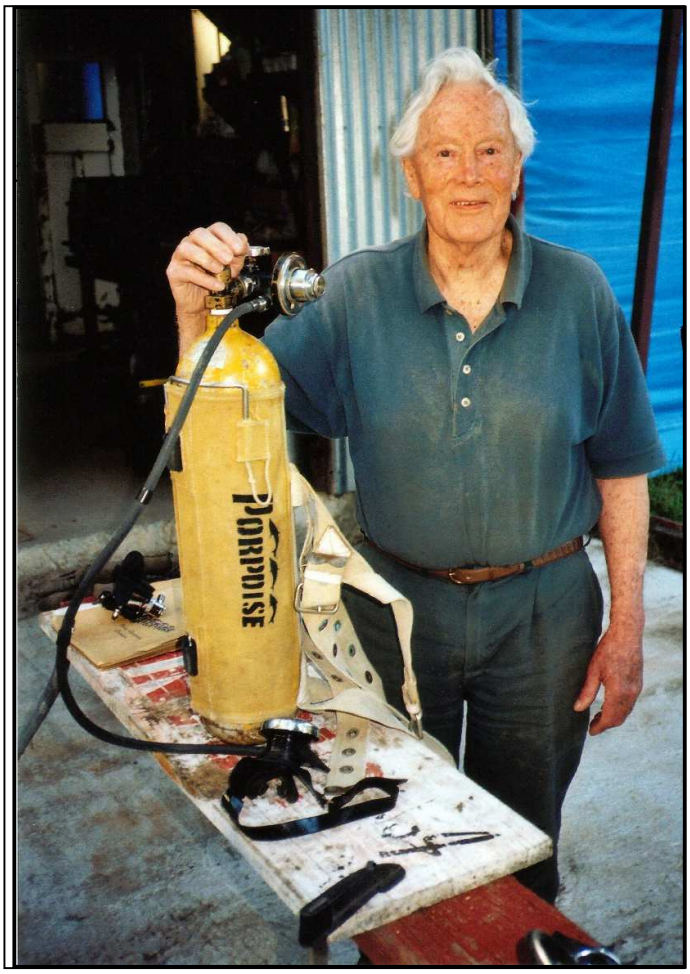
Early life as a 13-year old, living on a Peninsula with only one mile dividing the wild ocean from Victoria's huge Port Phillip Bay, the lure of the sea was ever present. The Bay was a lovely playground, but it was the wild, unpredictable ocean which offered the greatest attraction.

On the rare days when the sea calmed and the currents subsided, to explore the deep gutters, underwater caves and kelp-beds, gave me immense pleasure, but it wasn't until fins, masks and snorkels became available, that I could take advantage of these rare events. The shoreline was all rock, rock shelves covered at full tide, whilst at low tide pools and gutters were exposed which were the only means of getting in and out of the water, a beautiful, wild, turbulent area, completely devoid of surface craft.



Ted Eldred outside his workshop at Yarck in 2005. (Photo by Des Walters)

I became an ardent spear fisherman and this experience later provided the foundation for equipment design, it taught how to enter and exit the water, to use the heavy swells, to use the kelp when caught in a current and above all to conserve energy, avoid injury and fight like hell to survive. The wish to be able to employ a free-swimming diving unit, to explore the deepest depths and stay longer, had to remain only a wish until my engineering skills permitted me to commence designing and building such apparatus.

Progress came to a halt during the war years, but permitted me to undertake a comprehensive study of respiratory physiology pertaining to diving.

My first oxygen re-breather was built in 1946, followed over the next few years by improved models. During this period, I was able to fully explore the limitations of both diver and equipment, coming to the conclusion that in a near death situation, when respiration became uncontrollable, it was helpful to be breathing oxygen!

Ted Eldred - 22nd August 2005