

Summer/Autumn 2012



The dive boat



The harbour



Divers enjoy the air show



Steph finds a handy place for a kip

unknown sites bring delight

Tim Slow

Unknown Sites is a part of the Advanced Diver course, a part which many regard as the most challenging and trickiest to get signed off. It involves planning, managing and navigating to sites unknown to the dive organiser over a weekend period.

Last year, my first attempt at this in Salcombe was blown out so when Steve Lawson said he was going to arrange an Eastbourne boat, I thought perhaps I could take it over and manage it as an *Unknown Sites* weekend. Besides, the old man was going to be a Grandad just after the weekend, so I thought it only fair!

So the boat 'Dive125' was booked for Eastbourne and twelve of us duly agreed to head off to the south coast in the second week of August.

wreck diving delights

The boat was advertised as Sports Diver (35m max) and after a quick chat with the skipper it appeared that there are some great wrecks not too far out of Eastbourne in that exact range. There is a lighthouse (that looks like an oil rig) about 7.5 Nm off shore with some wrecks around it – I wonder why! Note this is not a lightship as the charts indicate as the lightship was replaced in the 1970s.

the early bird

The tides dictated early starts to get two slacks at the lighthouse on both days so I opted for a later start on the first day to get a cracking wreck *The Alaunia* on Saturday at slack in the lighthouse area and then a drift over *The Shoals*.

This was followed by a 6:15am start on Sunday taking us beyond Hastings down the coast where the slack was in the middle of the tidal range for a great wreck, *The Argonaut*, then back for slack on low tide for another liner *The Oceana*.

Added bonuses were the easy access into Eastbourne, the excellent new marina/harbour complex with free nearby parking, a loading jetty right opposite and facilities for beer afterwards in the marina complex. Saturday's diving was followed by a Thai meal in the evening which was enjoyed by all. Not to mention that we also chose the same weekend as the Eastbourne Airshow.

housemaids knee

Our Dive Officer – Mr Jewson – was invigilating your poor luckless author on the weekend: "where are we now", "what is the depth likely to be", "what does that buoy mean", "how far to

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deep thoughts

Martin Hamilton

a soggy season

I can't talk about the fantastic diving we've had over the summer because most was cancelled and although the hosepipe ban was inconvenient for washing dive gear, just leaving it out in the rain for a day had a similar effect.

Personally most of my diving has been under blue skies and calm waters because I have been in NDAC and Wraysbury for my rebreather course, and had dives in Italy with Terry Ede – now a potential dive holiday location.

The rebreather is my next stage in diving allowing me to safely dive more adventurously. Not long ago I never wanted to go deeper than 40m or do more than 10 minutes deco. I have learnt to never say never and that using a rebreather is like learning to dive again. For our new divers, trust me I feel your pain, buoyancy, mask clears, which after 20 years of diving should be second nature to me.

This reminds me how fortunate we are as a club to have so many of our members giving up their time to training and keeping our club running. We have 30 or more qualified instructors, who regularly give up their time to help us with our diving. There is a financial cost and often you guys sacrifice your own diving to go to Wraysbury, or dive *The Countess* when *The Sky* would be so much more tempting. I can't name you all, but please take this as a personal thanks for everything.

At the upcoming AGM we elect a new committee, and we need volunteers. It can be hard, frustrating but rewarding work. This year our membership has grown so we must be doing something right. Nic Hallett has nomination forms, so please come forward.

Finally in an attempt to take the dullness out of the winter, our Social Secretary has organised a number of events, and we have a number of invited speakers. Any more ideas please let me know.

Safe diving

unknown sites bring delight

continued from front page

the wreck" and making him jump through various other navigational and assorted hoops much to the amusement (but heartfelt and warming support) from the fellow divers as well as the skipper and his missus.

The presence of 'housemaids knee' was felt on my scuffed knees for over a week afterwards as I resorted to balancing maps on the seat and squatting on the floor with the boat bouncing all over the place with various instruments flying about. The distance off shore also made the spotting of transits difficult at the wreck sites but the site was duly found and shotted for the first dive on *The Alaunia* – a large Cunard liner.

A great dive to a maximum depth of about 28m at the sea bed with the bow forming a lattice work of girders and a massive ten tonne anchor suspended over the side – motionless in the gloom that you had resist the urge to push – an effort that only results in the diver going backwards (something to do with Newton and some second law)...Jeff Reed could explain!

Getting a bit lumpy as we headed back to shore to watch the airshow during the surface interval. Then heading back past the lighthouse to *The Shoals* for the second dive, a hardy five divers had to be told it was

off due to conditions being borderline impacting ingress onto the boat.

early doors

Sunday is that early start, 6.15am. Even earlier if you have to be up to add the finishing touches to the ruddy passage plans and charts. But its a long chug to *The Argonaut*, a luxury steam yacht sitting upright with 38m in the scour holes but 25m to the top of the deck. The vessel is famous for being used as a tour cruise ship and being the first package tour to sink. She sits mainly intact, a great dive enjoyed by all.

Full steam back to *The Oceana* gave us a surface interval, and another liner – a bit smaller but still massive – rumoured to still have some of the gold and silver bars and many of the P&O artefacts still intact...but none found by us. She is another great wreck with fabulous visibility up to 10 metres. All in all, fantastic wreck diving with another chance for some penetration and easy swim throughs.

back again next year

So Eastbourne then...they are all plusses generally. Great diving – better than expected from those that hadn't been before. I think it would be safe to say there are some cracking wrecks within easy access, and the tidal patterns mean it is possible to get two great wrecks dives in a day albeit with an early start.

The general view from the whole boat was that Eastbourne should not remain an 'Unknown Site' for regular club dives. It's easy to get to, less than two hours drive and great diving. We also had good weather and visibility – ideal for club diving.

Next year then, likely that Lawson and Slow or someone similar with be booking Eastbourne again.



Surface interval

making strides

our first sea dives

Nick Kendrick-Thomas

At last! After almost a year we're finally on our first sea dive. This would not be happening for me but for the sterling efforts of our instructors, who gave up their time to cover missed lectures and lake dives that we were unable to attend. To you all I offer my thanks.

Not the best start to the weekend, car accident on the way home, delay to setting off, have we got everything? Yes thanks to pre-planning and a brilliant wife. The journey down was thankfully uneventful and we arrived at our B&B at 10pm. Erica went to our room to study whilst I took a short constitutional – a medicinal visit to a local hostelry was in order – a good end to a frantic start.

taking the plunge

A good breakfast and off to the boat. This is when we realised just how much kit you have to lug on to the boat. Our Dive Manager, Gill Vine (she who must be obeyed), organised us all ensuring we stowed our gear tidily. Ten divers on the boat and it felt cramped to me. I was told that this was quite spacious...mmmm! A gentle swell on the way out, the briefing was given by Gill and all was set.

Everyone else went on the first wave whilst we waited for the first pair to return to the boat. We were then able to make our entry into the world of diving. Gill first, then Erica and last of all me – one giant step and all my expectations were realised. Enough air in my BC and I was floating, re-check everything and down we went. What a great feeling!

Erica had a few problems with her weight belt that needed sorting, so

she returned to the boat for Ian Vine's help whilst we held on to the shot. In the meantime Gill decided to take-up or invent a new sport, *scuba macrame*, using the nearest bit of rope available, the one attached to the marker buoy. What a tangle! Good lesson for us beginners on how easily things can happen. Erica returned and we were able to complete our CBL and towing exercise. Poor Erica, what a weight she had to pull. Back on board using the lift, – that was fun – I wonder how easy that would be in a choppy sea?

surface interval

The boat moved off astern, a quick rev of the engine, a lung full of diesel fumes and the gentle swell...I was sorting my kit for the second dive head down, big mistake! Whoops there goes my hearty breakfast. Brian, the skipper, was cooking up bacon and egg sandwiches, "Great timing Skip!" We arrive at a sheltered bay where some of the group went snorkelling with seals.

training dives completed

Everything checked and double checked and in we went. Ian first and then me descending into a forest of kelp. Having extricated ourselves we had a relaxed dive, plenty of rocks and sea life crabs, fish and three six foot long rubber coated fish with bubbles escaping from their humped backs: not whales just three of our divers, how strange we do appear. Back to the surface, a hot cup of tea and a calm sea back to Milford Haven.

Dinner that evening was at a local pub, Great company, good food and a pint of fine ale. What better way to finish off your first days diving?



Gill delivers the dive briefing to Nick



Nick and Erica kitted up and ready to dive



Nick takes a giant stride

a crafty dive in Crete

Mike Lindsay



deco stop

The Messerschmitt was shot down in the invasion of Crete in 1941 during the landing of German parachute forces. The ME109 was hit by British gunfire from promontory of land near Hersonissos and the pilot tried to ditch the aircraft on the water, but alas the plane tipped and broke in three pieces, flipped over and sunk upside down where it stands today. The three bladed propeller is stuck in the sand the fuselage behind and some distance behind that is the tail plane.

The preservation of the aircraft is quite extraordinary, part of the machine gun is intact, the crosses and swastika insignias are still discernable even after 70 years. If you push your thumb into the retracted undercarriage there is still air in the tyres. Debris from the aircraft is still scattered around and the guides gave me the VIP tour of wheels and ammunition boxes.

up, click, up

A final check of my air gauge, 80 bar it was time to ascend...though not before my photo opportunity, hanging in the water, by the plane on the shot all the usual poses. A three minute safety stop at five metres (PADI rules), I compromised and did mine at five and a half. A swim to the aft of the boat, fins off into the boat and back to the dive centre.

Great bunch of guys, helpful, attentive, a good sense of humour but above all a very professional approach to the skills of scuba diving. Thanks Andrigh, Paul and Victor of Kreta Maris.

backdrop: Undercarriage in wing LO

This should probably be entitled 'Wot I did on me holidays'. Carol and I decided with six other people to book an all-inclusive holiday in Stalia near Hersonissos in Crete.

It was intended to be a gluttonous booze-fuelled week and it worked out just as planned. However me being the sensible and responsible adult decided that I might need a day off. So what else is there to do in Crete? Well I ain't into ruins as I just see a reflection of myself. So to the diving websites: reefs and fish are OK if they're exotic but I was looking for something a bit more – well out of the ordinary. Trawling through *YouTube* I spotted a dive on a Messerschmitt 109 not ten minutes out from Hersonissos.

where's the diving mate?

Just after we arrived I espied two divers doing rescue training in the water. So, a swim over to the Dive Master to ask, "where's your dive centre mate?" His reply, "it's just behind you."

So that evening...off to the *Kreta Maris Dive Center*, general inspection of my qualifications and medical fitness to dive, kitted out with all I needed from fins, BCD, regs, mask, cylinders

and wetsuit. Cost to include two dives £60.00 – good value.

I only wanted to dive the ME109 which is at 26m and regarded as a deep dive. On production of my log book showing lots of 'one dives' they still considered me 'dived up'.

three plus one makes four

Met up with my dive guide, Andrigh the next day. We were to be a three but for reasons I did not understand the other diver decided this deep dive was not for him, so dive guides Paul and Victor joined us. So we were four: three PADI Dive Masters and little old BSAC me. Now you can probably guess what was going through my head. I've got to dive this right or BSAC will be the butt of the jokes in their local bar. And we can't have that can we?

locating the wreck

Into a small hardboat and a scudding ten minutes later we were at the dive site. Very impressive the site was found by just using transits. I peeked over the side just to make sure you couldn't see the wreck from the surface, but no the sea was too murky for that. Paul explained that they competed with the other local dive centre as how near they could drop the shot without hitting the plane. Anyone who hit the plane with the shot bought a case of beer!

down, down, down

Down went the shot and then down went us. We dropped off the shot at about 20m and swam slowly to the plane looming 15m away. Swam to the wing and there perfectly placed was the shot a mere metre from the wingtip. So I gave Victor a round of applause and we were set for the dive.



ME109 prop and nose

an unforgettable dive forgotten

Ruth Beattie



the rescue chopper

This is the dive that for a while I could not remember. It was the third day of the Jubilee dive weekend on Divetime out of Weymouth and Garry and I had just done a textbook perfect dive on the *Elena R*.

Vis was good, the wreck was only lightly covered with discarded fishing stuff and even contained the odd lobster. One in particular was adorned with barnacles and really did not want to come out. Garry and I were diving on 32% Nitrox planning to spend about 30 minutes at about 30m and then surface after a 5 minute safety stop, which is exactly what we did.

I was getting very cold on the dive and then we had to wait awhile on the surface to be picked up which was a bit hard because by then I really did need the loo! Back on board, I quickly de-kitted, got out of my dry suit and rushed off to the loo. I do remember it now.

then it went blank

The next bit I have been told about, but still do not remember! Apparently at some point after this I realised I could barely remember having breakfast. Had we dived? How many dives? Oops something was really wrong. Told Garry who checked me for stroke symptoms and that I knew who and where I was (how scary that must have been for him).

On to O2 and then the group contacted the coastguard, talked with the medic and chopper was summoned. I have seen the video and still don't remember too much of this. Bearing in mind I have a very bad

relationship with heights and going up in a helicopter was a horrendous idea I have to credit the chopper guy with an almost mystical quality, since I appear to be really enjoying the experience as I was winched into the helicopter and off to Poole Recompression chamber.

clarity returns

I am now starting to make memories again and I do remember being transferred to the waiting ambulance for the short journey to the recompression chamber. One of the ambulance people asked me what was happening that weekend – I said a diving weekend, then remembered it was also the Jubilee weekend – silly me!

I was met by very attentive staff at the Chamber, checked over by the attending doctor and then interned in the pot for 6 hours. I was given copious cups of tea and fed a pretty good *Dominos* pizza. The only problem was that for most of the time I had my head in a plastic goldfish bowl supplying me with O2.

By this time memories of the morning and the dive itself had reappeared, which was re-assuring although it was still unclear what had actually happened. I was given dive magazines to read, which was a bit difficult because, as distressing as all of this was, I realised quite quickly I still wanted to dive and was wondering if I ever would again.

The doctor when he discharged me suggested that I had most probably had a rare DCI but that a TIA (Transient Ischaemic Attack or mini-stroke) had to be considered too. Garry was able

to pick me up and take me back to the Eastney Hotel, where we later watched the fireworks with Alan and Louise Ashbery.

medical follow ups

Since then I have had lots of medical checks done: blood tests, blood pressure, Bubble Echo-cardiogram for PFO, MRI, ECG and ultrasound of my carotid arteries – all of which are happily just fine. According to perceived medical opinion isolated amnesia is a very rarely reported symptom of DCI, and not at all a symptom of TIA. It will almost certainly remain an unexplained (unearned) bend, although I was very cold, and I did rush around after the dive.

I have had a dive medical and been cleared to dive, which I am happy to report I have now done in Wraybury and Eastbourne. I cannot say I was exactly relaxed jumping in, and they were very conservative dive profiles – but hey, it did feel great to be back in the water again!

thanks all round

I really cannot thank my fellow divers and *Divetime's* skipper Paul Pike enough for support and reassurance during this – I just cannot remember most of it! The helicopter winch guy, the ambulance crew and in particular Doctor Roberts, Jim and Spencer at Poole were great. I would not want to do any of this again but I do know I was cared for extremely well.

storm-less in Stromness

Nic Hallett



Stromness

Monty Hall's Dive – The Ultimate Guide has at #9 Scapa Flow on the NW Scottish island of Orkney with “exceptional diving and, contrary to popular myth, the wrecks are not all deep and dark”.

It was a staging post for the Vikings, a military base from the 19th century and hardly surprising that after the German surrender in 1918 it was used to intern their high seas battle fleet which was then scuppered by their skeleton crew in the following June. Almost exactly 97 years later Bracknell BSAC organised an expedition to see what remained of those ships and the wealth of subsequent wrecks.

not expecting the unexpected

After one of the wettest summers on record, twelve divers arrive by car, boat and plane at the grey stone town of Stromness, led by the intrepid Martin Forde (plus wife and two black Labradors) only to find unexpected blue skies and sunshine.

It seems that the next five days will be summer for this often bleak North Sea island and, with the summer

solstice coming up fast, the bright, sunny days are a disorientating 20+ hours long.

Saturday afternoon the first divers arrive at the little harbour to find the *John L*, an old converted tug boat that seems more rust and Hammerite than actual metal but which has the advantage of having wide clear decks, low gunwales, a large heated hold and plenty of space for 12 twinsets, stages and a rebreather that looks like something from *Transformers – The Movie*. Being a tug she is very slow but unbelievably stable and with an onboard compressor and six J's of O2 will keep us in Nitrox all week.

Andy 'Eddie Stobart' Hodgson arrives with his flat bed truck completely full of cylinders, gear gulpers, softlime and kit and we gather around like traders at a car boot sale. A ferry arrives with Bendy and his missus, having left their car on the mainland, and a huge wheeled ferry container full of more kit. Everything is hauled over the harbour wall, a 4m drop to the deck of the dive boat and surprisingly nothing gets broken or dropped in the drink.

drink-diving

With everything assembled or stowed we retire to *The Flatty* – the quayside pub – for some dive planning. With the DO's words from the AGM about the impact of alcohol on diving incidents ringing in our ears, we calculate the required surface interval from a three pint dive in the pub, diving on Stella Artois at 5% so that we can safely enter the water at 11am the next day on a blood alcohol code of 'A'.

We are able to accelerate the off-alcoholing with a visit to the local chippy which sells everything from patties and haggis through to curry and red pudding...all with chips. Oh and they also sell fish so we'll be back here a few times before we leave.

The next four days are breathtakingly perfect: bright sunshine, flat calm, an hour or so chug out to site whilst kitting up and no slack windows to worry about. Morning dives are up to an hour at around 35m, a long surface interval either at anchor or visiting the fascinating museum on the island of Hoy, followed by afternoon dives that are shorter and shallower.

By late afternoon we are back in



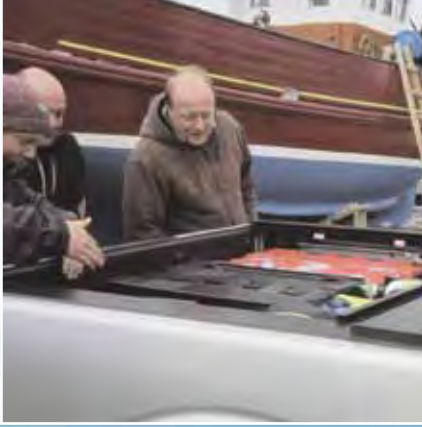
John L



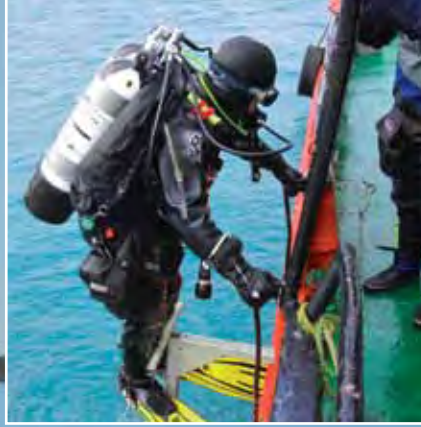
Steve and Nic



Relaxing in the sunshine



Andy H arrives with goodies



Ladder entry



Sarah beside prop

The Flatty, we are on holiday after all, which is so much more peaceful once Bendy's obsession with the video jukebox has worn off.

Our favourite dives are the light cruisers, starting with the *SMS Dresden* then the *Karlsruhe*, *Brummer* and *Coln*. They lie on their sides making it fairly easy to spot the less interesting keel from the more interesting decks: hawsers and winches are still in excellent condition and the superstructure is sufficiently broken to look inside.

was it a gun or was it a myth?

Rumour has it large guns are still in place, and most divers pretend to have seen them, whilst Tim and I look around unsuccessfully. Whilst it is really quite dark the vis is up to 10m so with a 'Light Cannon' you'd think you'd be able to find a proper cannon.

The battleships have turned turtle and the *SMS Krinprinz Wilhelm* is no exception. The best view is to dive underneath the superstructure and look up or join Andy with his rebreather and Bendy with his twin

15's plus 7L stage and do a 60 minute dive penetrating into the wreck itself.

who needs a lift?

The *John L* is about the last dive boat in the area not to have a lift. One is promised before next season although I am not sure what they are going to weld it to. However it did mean the return to 'proper' diving with a side mounted ladder which some divers elegantly tripped up like mountain goats whilst others...did not.

Zosia was usually more goat-like however did an excellent job at reminding us why you always exit the water with mask on and reg in and why you never wait underneath an exiting diver. On one of the last dives she sprung up the ladder only to miss the final rung, hung in mid air for a moment with a look of confusion on her face before giving in to the inevitable pull of gravity and did an elegant arse-first entry back into the briny. I was worried about Sarah who always came out with wild staring eyes as if she was terrified – until I realised her mask has prescription lenses.

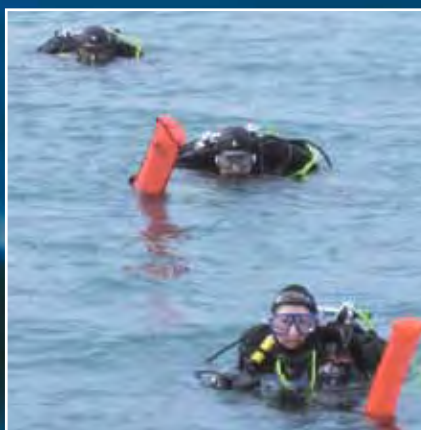
a huge find

On the Thursday we return to *SMS Dresden* for a final look and some scalloping and, following a clear brief from our colleagues and a little guidance on site, Tim and I find the missing guns...they are huge, how could anyone miss them! By now the weather has returned to being 'Scottish' and half the boat decide today is the last day of diving which means re-planning according to the BSAC mantra of 'Plan The Drink And Drink The Plan'.

Friday is a wonderful chance to see the island, its Neolithic heritage and the stunning red sandstone Cathedral in Kirkwall. The intrepid divers who instead went out in rain and strong winds arrived back early having got as far as kitting up but never getting in the water so it seemed like an opportunity to commiserate in *The Flatty*. And being the last night, we had decided that there is nothing like a wonderful curry to wrap up the trip...and we all agreed that the Indian Feast delivered from Kirkwall was nothing like a wonderful curry!



The Italian chapel



Divers up



Newspaper clipping in museum

lessons in sea survival

Pete Custerson



As Sarah and I are mostly hard boat divers, I have often wondered what the safety equipment carried on the boats we use is like when used in anger. Newbury BSAC had the same thoughts and worked with the RYA to put together a Sea Survival course aimed at divers.

The course was run at 'Stormforce Coaching' in Southampton. The last few spaces were advertised on the BSAC Southern facebook group, and we snapped them up. It started with a brief history of the safety regulations and then moved on to how to raise the alarm. Buoyancy aids, life jackets were discussed and demonstrated.

more than meets the eye

Life rafts were discussed in detail. The boxes we see on top of hard boats we use contain more than just a raft. There is also an emergency pack containing survival items such as paddles, sea sickness tablets, a sea anchor, bailer and puncture repair kit.

Too many things to go through in this article but it was equivalent to a

scene from Mary Poppin's holdall. The morning session then ended with a quick overview on the actions that should be taken before abandoning, and the fact that this should be the last resort.

putting it into practice

We then transferred to a nearby pool for practical sessions which were the best bit about the course. We covered the raft again, deployed it and practiced wet and dry entry, and the process you need to follow to get away from the craft you are leaving. It wasn't easy getting into the rafts and was quite an eye opener.

Next came a session on survival without a raft, joining together from small groups, then to make a large raft of people. This is all fine if you do not need to get anywhere, so we also practiced 'the crocodile' which allowed us to use our arms to paddle in a given direction. Looks like the conger in a swimming pool!

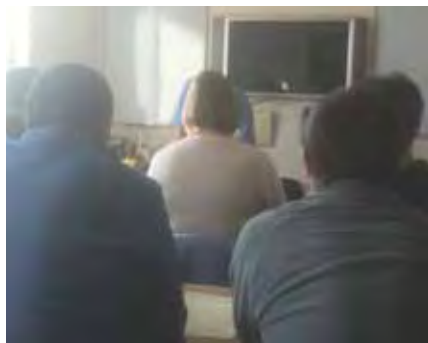
Sarah and I practiced a lot of this with our dry suits on. I was keen to try my drysuit with a life jacket to see if

the effect of the buoyancy of the suit impacts the jacket's ability to work. The conclusion is that a standard 100N life jacket does not have enough buoyancy to counteract the air in your boots. This could have the potential to put you face down if you were unconscious. The bigger capacity jackets were OK, but you might not get them as 100N is the standard. If you are using a wing as a buoyancy aid without cylinders, it could work. A BCD would work nicely.

its not flippin' easy

Then came a major section on righting an upturned raft. This consists of finding the correct section of the raft to avoid being hit by the CO2 cylinder, and climbing up and using your weight to turn it over.

Sarah is so small, that it was very difficult for her, but she persevered and completed the task. For her it was technique rather than brute force. The instructor was a strong bloke and going forward Sarah hopes he demonstrates how it should be done if you don't have 'bulk' on your side.



classroom session



turning the raft



using the kit



the trouble with bubbles

Ruth Beattie

On 20 September we hosted Dr Oliver Firth from the London Diving Centre (LDC). About 60 club members and guests from Newbury and Basingstoke BSAC clubs gathered in the Forest Suite, to listen to a talk entitled 'The Trouble with Bubbles'.

The pool session ended with scenarios, where we practiced all the skills we had learnt with added complications and 'weather'!

Feeling completely shattered we had lunch and returned to the classroom to cover what should be packed in a 'grab bag', the effects of hyperthermia/hypothermia and possible rescue scenarios. The day ended with a practical of using flares. It's amazing how many different types there are and the differing methods of setting them off. Not quite as easy as it should be, and a huge potential for burns.

highly recommended

I would strongly recommend the course be attended by anyone who uses boats of any kind. While some of the BSAC training covers the material here, there are definitely gaps in both knowledge and practical skills that this course addresses. Added to this it's a fantastic day out! I think the following from the RYA sums it up nicely: "It is a well-proven fact that, in the event of an emergency at sea, people with training are more likely to survive."



Pete lights a flare

As this suggests the subject was Decompression Sickness (DCS). Oliver began by describing the background to 'the bends' by disabusing the origin of the name – it does not refer to the painful restriction to movement of joints but rather the *Grecian Bends* posture that women of the time had because of their corsets! In 1870 25% of the construction crew of the Brooklyn Bridge got bent but by 1890 it was realised that if they came up slowly and had a 'stop' the incidence reduced to less than 2%. As the cause became understood researchers, such as Haldane, had by early 1900s worked out the consequences, largely by experimenting on himself.

Oliver described how the body can absorb nitrogen in a supersaturated state and produce its effects but how, in normal circumstances, the lungs eliminate the bubbles. The consequences of trapped bubbles on the body include obstruction and localised inflammation, producing symptoms including skin rashes, joint pains and CNS problems. Some possible reasons behind a bend were discussed that we well remember from our training: increased body fat, repetitive dives, rapid ascents, missing stops, saw tooth profiles, cold, dehydration, and exertion before, during or after diving. In particular exercise was interesting because there is some evidence that a short burst of strenuous exercise in the 24 hours preceding a dive and mild exercise while on stops might be protective, presumably because of increased circulatory flow, but afterwards it is definitely not a good idea.

Oliver talked about treatment regimes used during re-compression and described the facilities at the LDC. The process essentially crushes the bubbles allowing them to safely leave the body while using 100% oxygen to increase the transport gradient. We were also invited to go along for a dry dive, which might be an interesting off season experience – fancy being safely narked at 50m anyone?

He also talked about the experiences and consequences of some real cases of DCS and their possible causes and treatment. Some were quite shallow, or diving within tables with no obvious provocations, however some had incidents or were particularly rash while diving. While describing one individual he also referred to the higher incidence of PFOs present with neurological DCS in particular. The total incidence of DCS in divers is believed to be 0.1%.

What was worrying was the different ways the casualties were treated. Denial came not just from the divers themselves, but buddies, dive outfits, and medics who were at times reluctant to treat a diver presenting with symptoms as potential DCS. The take home message is that diving within tables may not totally protect a diver and that any symptoms not present before the dive but occurring up to 48 hours after deserves to be investigated as a potential bend and that a diver themselves may have to insist on treatment. A round of questions followed the talk, before our chairman, Martin Hamilton, thanked Oliver for his interesting talk.

a call from the dark side

rebreathers: myths, facts and reality

Andy Hodgson



making the checks

Sadly, due to the number of incidents and deaths involving rebreathers, particularly in the early days, the 'Yellow Box of Death' has gained an unwelcome and inaccurate reputation.

Technology, experience and most importantly training have all improved significantly now. The BSAC introduced a number of courses, supporting the fact that rebreathers are safe, with proper training. Bracknell Sub Aqua Club can run courses, unsurprisingly spearheaded by technical instructor, Nick Jewson.

next step in diving

For me a rebreather was the next challenge to keep the diving fire burning. I'd been thinking about it for over a year, having been on dive boats with rebreather divers who had longer bottom times but were back on the boat the same time as me.

There are of course many other reasons to buy one: superior gas management, extended dive durations, reduced decompression obligations, less core temperature reduction, lighter load on your back, the potential to reduce gas costs and for those who wish to go deeper it can be physically and practically far less demanding than open circuit.

Watching the internet forum sites for many months, I established what equipment was available on the second hand market and what to expect for the money. Then a unit that

ticked all the right technical boxes became available and after a little negotiation I purchased an *Inspiration Vision* with bail out valve, auto dill valve, temp stick, only 40 hours use and a recent manufacturer service.

myths versus fact

A common statement from the muggles is that rebreathers are for technical divers. For many, diving a twinset, going beyond 30 metres and using deco gases is considered technical. Anyone with a Dive Leader, Accelerated Decompression Procedures or Sports Mixed Gas qualification would certainly be considered a technical diver by many other training agencies.

The entry level rebreather course doesn't go beyond the above mentioned training programmes, in fact it perfectly mirrors them. However, it does make the diver more efficient and flexible for any dive within the 40m range compared to an open circuit diver.

Yes, you do have to start all over again and there are a lot of technical and practical obligations. They are expensive, but you don't have to buy a new one, and second hand they compare to a twinset.

No, it will not try to kill you at every opportunity, provided you adhere to the pre, during and post checks you have been taught. It is not that difficult, just very different. You don't have to spend hours on the boat preparing before each dive. Ask anyone that has

dived with me recently. I would also mention that you cannot justify the purchase on cost savings, unless you do a lot of tri-mix diving. However if you do adventurous sports level diving and beyond, it won't cost more than open circuit.

Due to the haste of purchasing my unit, no consideration was given to when and where I would train. The Red Sea is nice but expensive, and unlikely with Christmas coming up and SWMBO (wife) would justifiably probably cut something important off.

I spoke to Nick who was happy to run the lectures over the winter, waiting until spring for open water. Being a bit nerdy, I read the user manual and course notes multiple times and, as all engineers do, I stripped my new bit of kit down then had to work out how to put it back together again. It still worked and there were no bits left over. Bonus.

training matters

Having recently completed the Accelerated Deco, Advanced Diver and Sports Mixed Gas courses, I found most of the course easy to follow and complimentary to what had been learnt before.

Know your PPO2 is constantly drilled in, as managing the partial pressure of oxygen is fundamental to rebreather operation. Keeping this at the optimum level is how you maximise bottom time and minimise decompression. Too low and you run out of oxygen, and too high and you



Nick is ready and waiting

get too much oxygen – both equally bad for you! A safe bail out is also important as trained in the other courses mentioned.

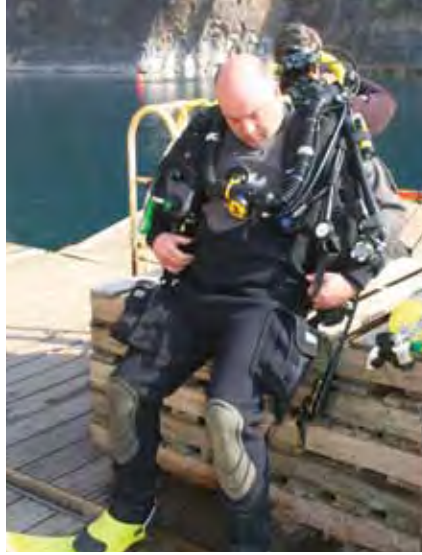
I had a pretty full dive calendar booked for the coming season but wanted to use my box from the start. Like most training programmes, there are a minimum number of dives and targets, and normally the course is completed in buddy pairs, taking it in turns to observe and demonstrate. I was the only person doing the course so Frances buddied me and I had Nick's 100% attention, lucky me!

time to go diving

The first dive was in Wraysbury on Mothering Sunday, pushing my luck with Carol. It was cold, quiet and impossible to control my new toy. Oh dear, what have I done? Nick was asking me to do things I didn't think were possible, then he would turn off my gas, or he would inflate my diluent valve, and then...*Holy mother of...* what was he trying to do to me?

The following weekends were at Vobster and NDAC which were even colder. An hour at 6°C with Nick doing his best to terminate my mortal existence with my hands going numb and brain freezing and I still couldn't control the thing. This really wasn't as expected.

For some strange reason it wasn't very busy at either site so we managed to get two dives with good surface intervals. The last day was back at NDAC on Easter Sunday (Carol you're



Andy finishes kit up

a saint) and I was told we could just go for a dive but Nick couldn't resist it. Flashing laminated prompt cards every five minutes with 'what if' scenarios written on them.

This time it all came together, I was more confident and certainly more in control. It was all becoming second nature and dare I say it, enjoyable. The written exam is open book which greatly reduces the pressure. Don't expect to find all the answers in the course notes though, but if you have completed any of the technical SDC's you will find it familiar.

This was the most rewarding challenge I have taken in over 25 years of diving. The hardest part is forgetting what you already know and starting all over again.

silent partner?

They call it silent diving, that is unless you have a buddy that can't stop talking. It's amazing how close you can get to the marine life without them being disturbed. My 20th non-training dive while on the recent club trip to Scapa Flow and it was truly enjoyable. Apart from checking my instruments every 30 seconds I was relaxed and comfortable, my buoyancy trim seems to be under control and the box of tricks didn't play up once.

Imagine an unlimited collection of differing Nitrox mixes for multi level diving and 100% O2 for deco, together with a clear head, warm breath and hugely reduced decompression stops all without swapping gases



into NDAC

and changing computer settings. Unfortunately I was buddied with Bendy, diving open circuit and who has a community order restricting him from being left alone, which resulted in an extra 25 minutes of deco when I could have been back on the boat. I still only used 40bar of O2 from a three litre cylinder, amazing.

Those who achieved similar run times to me throughout the week spent over £100 on gas fills. I spent £18 on O2 and used about £20 worth of Sofno Lime (the clever stuff that removes CO2).

cool kit

In my opinion this is the ultimate diving tool to be considered by anyone diving twinsets already or thinking of it. A good condition second hand *Inspiration Classic* is a similar cost to twins and you could probably sell it on for what you paid for it. If you are really flush you can pay £10K on a new one with all the extras but that really isn't necessary at entry level.

My kit is rated beyond 120 metres which is more than adequate. The only drawback is the unavoidable desire that all dive blokes possess, an uncontrollable attraction to shiny new things. They are all so beautiful.

many thanks

My special thanks go to Nick and Frances Jewson for generously giving up so much of their time for no personal gain, like so many of the instructors in our club.

e-news

a new way to receive club news

Gill Vine

Although we all look forward to receiving the paper *mouthpiece*, it does take a lot of time to put together, edit and design (at least forty hours once we have received articles). Printing is costly (around £1.50 per 8 page copy) for such a small number, and the design relies on free design expertise which may not always be available.

As an experiment, Ruth and I have decided to run an email based newsletter in parallel to this printed issue of *mouthpiece*. This means that all the stories contained within are also available as articles in the 'club news' section of the website, and are also available as an email newsletter if you wish to sign-up for it.

The value of *mouthpiece* to the membership is not disputed and there are no immediate plans to stop publication, but I would urge you to try the e-version out as a new means of communication. This will cost the Club

nothing to produce and will mean that news can reach you in a more timely manner. Combine this with various online tools and you can read it on any device including your *Kindle*, *iPad* or *iPhone*. The system we are investigating is called *MailChimp* and the e-letter will arrive in email format with quick links to the articles on the club website.

To subscribe to the email newsletter, go to bracknellscuba.org.uk and click on the club newsletter sign up link. You can unsubscribe at any time. Your email and personal information is not shared with anyone outside the Club.

stop press

Following are snippets from some late additions for which we had no room in this edition. The full articles are published on the website, and in the email newsletter as there are no space or time issues there – another good reason for giving the online version a try!

Zosia's cookery corner

Anyone who has dived on a boat with Zosia will know how yummy this cake tastes! So why not give it a try!

KEKES

FRUIT AND WALNUT CAKE

250g unsalted butter at room temperature
250g plain flour
250g caster sugar
5 eggs separated
½ teaspoon baking powder
250g mixed raisins, halved dates and chopped walnuts
2 tablespoons dark rum

METHOD

Preheat oven to 180°C

In a big bowl, cream the butter and sugar with an electric mixer until pale, light and fluffy. Gradually add egg yolks – put egg whites in separate bowl. Mix well between each addition and scrape down the bowl with a rubber spatula from time to time. Add flour and baking powder. Mix well. Add raisins and rum. In separate bowl whisks egg whites until stiff. Very carefully add egg whites into the mixture and fold it in with a spatula, do not over-mix.

Pour mix into the loaf tin lined with baking paper. With a knife make a cut along the cake.

Bake for just over an hour. Check if a cocktail stick comes out clean.

catch of the day



Looking at fish identification from a different angle...at Billingsgate market!

divers boot camp



Last minute booking on liveboard means a great deal for club members.

family liveboard



Combining diving with a family holiday...is it feasible?

kit review



Slow thoughts on Suunto D6 dive computers.