

The Muddy Puddle

May 2004

In this issue of The Muddy Puddle we have a preview of the club's trip to the Farne Islands, where Seals are expected; Alan 'Scapa' Glen tells us about some of his favourite Scapa Flow moments; Paul Brown describes diving an Unknown Wreck on a recent Normandy trip; Uncle Scubbie has the first of what looks like being a regular look at 'alternative' dive techniques; and we welcome back regular articles such as Diver of the Month.



A week or so after the Easter trip, I received a mysterious phone call from somebody calling himself 'Narked', who claimed he had some information (dirt) that needed to be reported and would I mind sorting that out. Hopefully you all saw that special Muddy Puddle.

After that went out a few people mentioned that it was a shame we didn't have a club magazine anymore. This had been mentioned at AGM's, committee meetings and in the pub as well.

So now we do! Hopefully I'll put this together every couple of months if there is the interest in it. So please let me know if you want it and feel free to help by writing something!

Ben

Upcoming Dives

28th - 31st May 2004: Farne Islands

6th June 2004: Frode (RIB)

12th June 2004: Northcoates (RIB)

20th June 2004: City of Brisbane (Nauticat)

26th - 27th June 2004: Weymouth (Kyarratoo)

3rd July 2004: Mira (Nauticat)

Contact Steve Barrett for details on any available spaces:
stephen.barrett@citigroup.com

07900-226-487

THE FARNE ISLANDS

(Ben Stock)

This spring bank holiday the club makes a trip to the Farne Islands, a series of 33 islands or rocks at low tide lying between 1¼ to 4 miles of the coast of north Northumberland. These are split into two main groups - the Inner and Outer Farnes, however at high tide the number is reduced to 23. The island of Farne itself is part of the Inner group and is the largest and highest of all the islands.

Being a relatively new diver I have not been to the Farne Islands before. This article summarises some of what I found out when I looked into what can be expected over the weekend. These have barely scratched the surface, but will hopefully give you an idea of what the diving will be like.



The islands are an internationally important breeding ground for seals, with huge numbers making a home in the area. It seems fairly certain that we can look forward to encounters with seals over the weekend, with many stories of divers having fins and other bits of kits nibbled at.

Other life that we can may see include orca (attracted by the seals), dolphins, crabs of many varieties, lobsters, octopus and much more.

There are many wrecks in the area, although the more accessible are fairly broken up and many wrecks over-lap each other. But with so many wrecks, there is bound to be something worth having a look at regardless of the weather.

The Farne Islands seem to be a good place for diving for just about everybody and it looks like we are set for a great weekend.



SEALS

"I think diving with the seals around the Farne Islands would do it for most people"

..."which will guarantee close encounters with our largest mammal, the grey seal?"

"And I mean close—not just some hazy apparition in the green gloom.....but eyeball-to-eyeball interaction"



"Few animals actively play with divers.....Grey seals are one of the few exceptions"

"One of the seals started a detailed inspection of my camera and flash guns"

"What the Farnes may lack in sheer numbers of fish is made up for by one of the most exciting encounters you are likely to have in UK waters. The grey seal is very much the star of the show here"

Recent research has revealed that the Farne Islands hold a strange fascination for grey seals. The Sea Mammal Research Unit at St Andrews University has spent recent years tagging seals colonies all over the United Kingdom to allow satellite tracking. The results showed that seals from all over the United Kingdom regularly travel to the area, often passing many similar feeding areas on the way to the Farne Islands. "It is as if the area was a magnet for seals" says Professor Mike Fedak of the unit.

With a population estimated to be around 8000, easy access and locals geared towards getting divers among them it would seem that encounters with grey seals are all but guaranteed over the long weekend. To see them underwater the dives will need to be planned around low water, which is the seals favourite time for resting. Although now well used to divers many of the seals resting on the rocks will come into the water to play with divers.



Juvenile grey seals are very curious and can be expected to approach repeatedly. A mature bull can weigh in at 300kg, around twice the weight of a red deer, making it the largest mammal in the country by a long way and must be an impressive sight. Just make sure to pack some spare underwear...!

Seals are well known for nibbling at divers fins and any other piece of kit they can get to. This is done quite gently though, and just seems to be a seal's way of feeling the consistency of objects and checking them out.



There seems to be many reasons for the seal's playfulness. Seals are adventurous by nature, an instinct that allows three-week old grey seals to enter the water in the search for food once their mothers leave them to fend for themselves. Seals also have a highly social lifestyle, with what appears to be a 'hierarchy' within colonies. Young grey seals are highly ambitious and are always keen to push their way up the social ladder in the colony. This social ambition is displayed in play, with young animals taking every opportunity to push their luck. This may explain why seal encounters often start with tentative moves on their part, getting bolder as they gain confidence.

It looks like diving with the seals in the Farne Islands is going to be a special experience for everybody. One thing is clear though from everything I read - the best way to see seals is to be calm, patient and let them come to you, so relax and let them come and play!



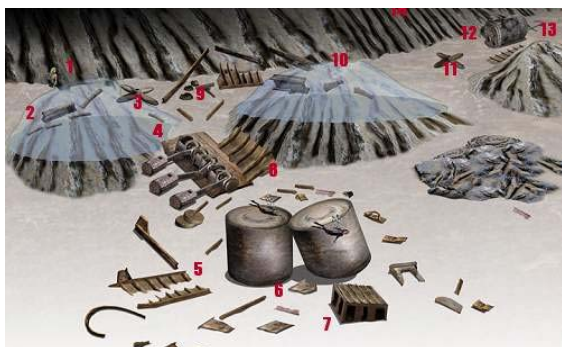
DIVE SITES

Knivestone

The Knivestone is the most easterly and seaward of all the Farne Islands visible at low tide. It can dry to around 3½ meters and consists of one large island and four smaller rocks.



The Knivestone and surrounding reefs have proved to be a hazard for shipping for centuries, with a number of wrecks in the area. More than 60 vessels have been known to come to grief in this area since 1800, and there are likely to have been more unreported vessels that disappeared without a trace. With so many wrecks in the area, it is hard to be 100% sure what wreck you are looking at. In recent years 2 ship's bells have been found at the base of the Knivestone reef, and there looks like being more there to be found.



Much of the wreckage on the western side of the reef comes from the largest ship to be wrecked in the area, the 5737 ton steamship Abyssinia. Launched in 1900 at Hapag, she spent much of the First World War interned in Chile. Released at the end of the war she was on her way back to Germany when she ran into the Knivestone on 3rd September 1921.

The Abyssinia now lies on a rocky slope about 25 metres from the reef and at a shallow depth of 16 metres. The boiler stands proud of the seabed amid a jumble of wreckage.

Other wrecks in the area include the Jan Van Ryswyck, The Port Levan, The Autumn, The Sarah and many more. With so many wrecks in the area and visibility of 5-15 metres (allegedly), as well grey seals to have a play with, this looks like being a dive site worth a visit.

The Somali

One of the most popular dive sites of the North-East coast in recent years, The Somali was built as a 'Commodore' in 1930 and was a large cargo ship of 6890 tons.

The Somali was heading to Hong Kong from Blyth in Northumberland, carrying a general cargo including gas masks, fire extinguishers, shoes, medical supplies, batteries, bicycles, a number of 4x4s, 100 tons of lead toy soldiers and some coins amongst other things. However, in the afternoon of 25th March 1941 three direct hits were scored on the No. 3 hold by Heinkel 111 bombers. This hold was carrying hay and resulted in a massive fire.

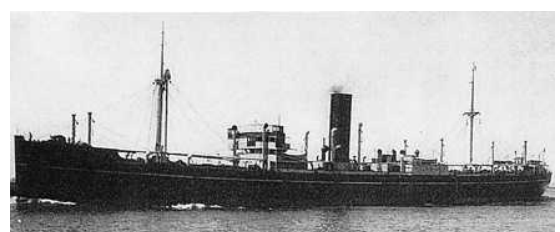
The 72 crew and 38 passengers fought the fire, and the Pelican, an armed trawler took her in tow. At 11pm with the fire and weather both worsening the trawler took off all on board and slipped the tow.

In the early hours of the 27th March a salvage crew from the tug Sea Giant came aboard to save The Somali by beaching her. At 1pm that afternoon the ship was about a mile from Beadnell Point when a massive explosion blew the ship in half. The force of the explosion was felt around the Beadnell area and cargo, including red-hot coins, rained down on the local area.



The wreck now lies at a depth of 30 metres and is fairly broken up. The holds are still reported to contain some cargo, so it may be worth having a look around. Forward of the fold the ship ends, with the bow section having been blown off by the explosion. The bow has been found by accident by divers on drift dives, but nobody seems to be certain where it is. There are stories of a safe in the bow with some secret cargo yet to be found.

The rear hold of the ship was a refrigerated unit, with its tubes still lying all over the place. Near this hold on the starboard side can be found a gun mount, with the 12-pound anti-aircraft gun still attached.



The Acclivity

A small British Motor Tanker of 389 tons, built in 1931 the Acclivity was en route to Thameshaven with a cargo of linseed on 20th January 1952 when she ran into trouble. Just after midnight the vessel suddenly shuddered, waking the crew. Just beneath the surface, out of sight of the watch she had hit was is known in sailing circles as a growler.



The Acclivity now had a bent bow and several hull plates had popped. Water gushed into the hold space and the captain ordered the pumps started. A small motorboat, the Magrix, made for the now stationary Acclivity and took off all the crew. However, the

Acclivity was in no rush to sink.

At 6.10am the tug Hendon left Tyne to assist the Acclivity back to port. Meanwhile the Acclivity's skipper had persuaded the Magrix's captain to take his ship in tow.



The Magrix's captain told the coastguard at 7.12am that he was trying to reach Tyne, though he didn't have much hope.

He was right, an hour after taking the vessel in tow she was so heavy with water that the tow cable broke. At a minute to 9am the coastguard noted that she had sunk.

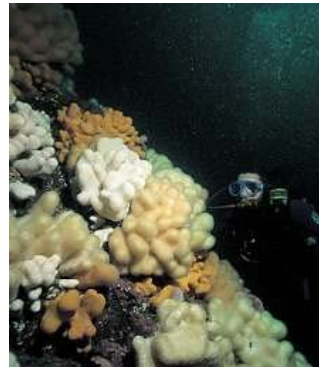
The wreck is now mainly intact, lying on her port side at 34 metres against a small reef. Her superstructure has now fallen onto the stony seabed, with debris between the decks and the reef. The dent in the bow is obvious, so it must have been a large rock it hit. The stern is has decking that is deteriorated making it easy to penetrate the wreck and it is possible to swim through the length of the ships interior. Apparently the bell has yet to be



found, and is thought to somewhere amongst the silt and debris around the bow section.

The Chris Christensen

Off the south-west tip of Longstone in around 32 metres of water lies the SS Chris Christensen, which ran aground on 16th February 1915. This 1941 ton Danish ship was 250ft long and had beam of 37ft.



When wrecked she was travelling in ballast with her four holds empty from her home port of Aarhus, Denmark bound for Newcastle-upon-Tyne to pick up a general cargo. All of her 19 crew managed to get off safely.

Although the Chris Christensen only struck the top of the reef, and was riding high in the water, she was so badly holed that she slid of the reef and sunk.

The wreck now lies against the reef and is fairly well broken up. The boiler has rolled towards the centre of the wreck. Forward of the boiler the 'rocks' on the seabed are actually coal. Forward of the boiler the general line of the wreckage twists about 20° to port, suggesting that the hull of the Chris Christensen broke just forward of the wheelhouse.



All that remains now is debris on the seabed, which can be followed further forward to the lower part of the bow which stands upright on the seabed. Also in the area are cargo and anchor winches and the upper bow.

There are also two anchors to be seen in fairly close proximity, the larger of which is likely to have been that of the Chris Christensen with the smaller possibly being carried or lost at a later date.



DIVING OFFICERS BULLETIN



My fellow BSAC 23 divers, it is after much soul searching that I have to start this article as Diving Officer with a confession - I am not the best diver in the club. Yes, I know some of you will be shocked. Some even crying with this shattering knowledge, but I'm afraid it is true. Sorry about that. However, for those about to end it all there is an upside. Although I might not be the 'Best', I do think I possess an enthusiasm for the club that I hope is shared by my peers.

As for my skill level (and I use the term very loosely) and for the benefit of those who don't already know me, I have been a Dive Leader for a few years with (in)experience of leading dives and marshalling. I am also a Nitrox qualified. These are my qualifications to be the club's Diving Officer, along with a genuine enjoyment of diving in a club environment.

As Diving Officer I would like to make a couple of things crystal clear. Any club dive that I am in any way responsible for means that my decision will be final as to who dives, who with, where and to what depth.

Any other diving activity that is undertaken by club members but unauthorised by BSAC 23, I will consider to be out of my jurisdiction and therefore nothing to do with me whatsoever. However, please remember that you have a duty of care to yourself and to others, and towards any vessels or equipment that you use.

The Easter trip - congratulations to everyone for contributing to what was a safe and enjoyable Plymouth this year. I know it was a bit cold, I know some (all?) suits leaked but at least we got to dive all the way through and got some decent viz. I hope the rest of the season is as good.

Yours in Diving,

Paul

PS: for the Buddhists amongst us - 'Mules when trained are good, and so are the noble horses of Sindh. Strong Elephants when trained are good, but the best is the man (or women) who trains himself (herself).' *Taken from 'Dhammapada' (around 3rd Century BC)*

TRAINING OFFICERS BULLETIN

Recently I ran a 2 day Dive Leader training event at Steve Barrett's house. He very kindly agreed to let us use his dining room table. Ben, Roger, Alan and myself also enjoyed the bacon butties. Alan L could not attend on day 2 and is completing the lectures at my home every Wednesday evening.

The next stage is to do the theory assessment. Alan should have completed the lectures by the end of the month and I would like all the current Dive Leader trainees to prepare for the theory test at the end of the month. You are all welcome to attend my home when ever you feel confident, to do the theory assessment. Likewise I am happy to go over anything that you would like to clarify before the theory assessment.

The next stage is to do the dive leader open water skills assessments. I shall organise this when everyone has passed the theory assessment.

As far as further training is concerned, there are some great courses available. I am happy to book and organise courses such as VHF radio and all the other skill development courses that BSAC organise through the regional coaching scheme.

I believe that there are still several club member who would like to do the dive leader theory. Please get in touch and I shall organise something. My number is 0208 696 0027

I also need to know how many of you need to do the new sports diver top up lectures to make you eligible for the new version of the dive leader lectures.

Please contact me so that I can make things happen.

Regards

Alan



DIVING A VIRGIN WRECK

(Paul Brown)

"You can either do the Lanfranc, the submarine or we can go and check out another mark that Jules gave us just near it". This was the offer made to us by Steve Johnson on Nauticat on our last day of a week's expedition to Normandy in 2003. We'd had some good diving during the week and we were steaming back to Brighton, plan was to dive en-route on one of the mid-channel wrecks. However the offer of another unknown was too much to resist.



Back in 2002 Steve had been on one of his annual trips to Normandy and one evening had helped a French fisherman named Jules fix a problem on his boat. In return the Jules filled Steve with beer and allowed him to copy his charts of the area which were littered with marks for wrecks and fishing grounds. Happy Days.....

Fast forward to September 2003 and we had searched for and dived a few of Jules's wrecks and very enjoyable they had been. The mark we were going to look at was a complete unknown - it may have just been a good area to fish, or it may have been a wreck, we just didn't know. Searching for wrecks is, traditionally, a very boring exercise. You go to the mark then spend hours going over the area trying to find something on the echosounder. Luckily with Jules's latest mark this wasn't to be the case. In flat calm seas, with the sun out, Steve edged the boat towards the mark, then the moment we were on it, bang - a whacking great red image on the sounder standing 3-4m off the 38m seabed!!! This had all the makings of a very special dive...



An hour later was slack water and we were kitted up and on our way down the shot. Me and my buddy (also called Paul) were first in and dropped through the 10m vis towards the wreck. As it came into view we swam the shot draped over the stern of a fairly small wreck sitting bolt upright. We were on the bed, so we swam up over the deck where we landed on the ship's telegraph, a small compass and 3 portholes!!!!!!! After getting very excited we set about the gear with goody and lift bags. As I was putting the portholes in my bag I noticed that Paul had gone....."Bastard" I thought "He's gone for the bell....". After lifting the portholes I swam off past more portholes towards the stern. On my way I bumped into a screaming, smiling Paul - lumping the bell along the deck so that one of our fellow divers could get a photo.

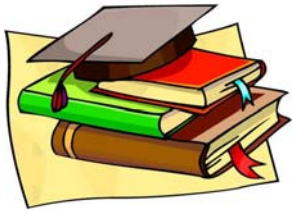
Once the bell was up we set about looking for more gear, but by this time the rest of the divers were down and the vis was shot to pieces. Paul decided to go up so Skipper Steve could get in for a look about, so I went off to see if I could find any other gear and get a proper look at the rest of the wreck. She was a small ship, probably just a cargo vessel or large trawler and there was little in the way of identifying features. All too soon my dive time was up and I had to ascend for 25mins of very boring stops. On surfacing the boat was only a few feet away and on the roof was the bell. Smiles were all very large and everyone was dying to get the stuff out of the goody bags and have a look. In total we had managed to get 10 portholes, the brass steam whistle, the telegraph and the bell. All in all a good day's work!!!! From the bell we identified the ship as the Ruth, although there wasn't a date on it. I am currently doing some research into the ship to find out a little more, perhaps for a return trip next year?



This really was a fantastic dive and something that very few divers get to do. Undived wrecks in 38m are pretty rare these days and I can honestly say it is probably my most memorable dive. It was a cracking end to a cracking week - and the good news is that there are still loads more of Jules's marks to go and have a look at!!!!



If you would be interested in coming on this trip in September 2005 please let me know. You will need to be happy diving in the 40-50m range and being out on the boat all day.



BSAC 23 BOARDING SCHOOL NEWS

Will the following boys please see me for extra 'choir practice'

Name	Form
Lawrence, A	IIB (or not IIB)
Elphick, D	34B
Glenn, A	Lower VI
Brown, P	Remedials
Carvall, P	Remedials
Stock, B	Infants
Hart, A	Juniors
Edgerton, R	Upper VI (Prefect)

Signed *The School Chaplain*
"good boys!"

Also will the following boy stay behind to finally finish his cycling proficiency certificate

Griffiths, C

HMS SCYLLA

(Andy Bennett)

Ah. April 9th, the start of BSAC23's annual pilgrimage/rumble to the South West

I had been told that this was the trip to go on and that in previous years many shenanigans and high jinx had taken place as well as, obviously, diving. I was regaled with tales of drunken debauchery and, that well known pastime synonymous with most divers, bare bottoms being hung out at every given opportunity all over Plymouth (see also Brighton, Falmouth, Weymouth).



Alas, this high entertainment was not to be save for a couple of (mild) hangovers, the annihilation of a scallop bed by our budding Jamie Olivers (to put this into perspective, if this had been a war we're talking the massacre of innocent women and children) and Chris Griffiths getting so plastered he was unable to open his front door, however he mastered the art of belching and farting, whilst still asleep - what an athlete. What skill - I feel an Olympic Sport coming on.....

Having survived the singularly unique driving style of Alan Lawrence (sorry Alan!), my first dives in the UK for about 10 years held no fear.

This year, the wreck that caused most debate was the newly sunk hulk of HMS Scylla. The ex-navy frigate had been sunk at the end of March, not far from the James Egan Layne. It had been acquired by the National Marine Aquarium, using lottery money, to provide a study of how artificial reefs grow. An added bonus was to attract divers to the wreck.



Cleverly, our skipper, Pete Fergus, planned it so we would dive it second after the JEL and when we got to the site we could see the logic. Everyone's first dive of the Bank Holiday seemed to be taking place on the Scylla.

Having done a great dive on the JEL (great vis, great life, though as Paul Brown will testify, my diving technique was somewhat rusty!) we waited for our turn on the Scylla.

WANTED!

Articles for the club magazine.

You can write about anything you like, as long as is vaguely diving related. You can write it in just about anything, this month people used Word, Email and one not so technologically minded bloke had even wrote and faxed his article!

Don't worry about presentation, spelling and so on too much, I can sort that out when I put the magazine together. If you have any pictures you want to use then great, but if not don't worry.

So please, write something!

Contact details:

ben@sectorforensics.net

07793052713

We hit the main deck at 15m, pootled about on the upper corridor for a bit shining our torches into some of the many newly cleaned crevices and storage spaces then made our way to the bow before ascending.



Opinion about the wreck was split more or less fifty-fifty. There were those that thought it was quite boring - a wreck with no history, so well cleaned as to be devoid of any personality and far too many signs warning of the dangers of...well, diving really (doh!). On the other hand, many people could see the potential of the wreck to provide a variety of life in the future and as a training wreck for all sorts of dive skills. Though you have to ask how much life will be left to study with all those divers clambering about it. And as for those cameras recording the growth of the reef? Let's just say that the diving community's sense of fun (and especially Croydon BSAC's) will play a large part in determining the success or failure of the project.

The rest of the weekend was, by all accounts, one of the best starts to the season people can remember. The weather was outstanding for the time of year, the company mellow, the diving varied and interesting and the skipper superb. Can't wait till next year!

SO YOU FANCY A DIVE?????

(Paul Brown)

You know how it is - Thursday comes and the weather is (for a change) looking good for a dive at the weekend. Sods law means the club doesn't have a dive sorted out, so where do you go? Here are a few pointers for a short notice dive that I find handy.

1. USE THE RIB - Yep, thats what its there for, to dive off! If you can get a crew of 4 and a coxwain (Me, Dave Elphick, Steve Barrett, Alan Glen or Keith Wicks) then you can go out. As a rough rule of thumb slack on the wrecks we dive is about 1-1.5hrs before LW or HW. There is an issue with the tides and launching, but we can usually sort something out!



2. BOOK A SHUTTLE SERVICE - More and more boats are offering shuttle services which you can book on to as individuals. Closest to us are the RIB's that Wittering Divers run, Eclipse from Selsey and Copperhead Diver from Littlehampton. Typically these cost £20 for a dive and will go to the local wrecks and reefs (Northcoates, Shirala, T-Pot, Mixon, Waldrens etc). If you don't mind driving a bit further then Weymouth is your best bet. Both the Old Harbour Dive Centre and Portland Scuba Centre run shuttles doing everything from the wrecks in the harbour to drifts round Portland and deep offshore wrecks.



3. PHONE THE SKIPPERS - We are not the only club that finds it hard to fill spaces on hardboats! A call to the Steve on Nauticat on a Friday night can easily get you a dive for the weekend, and often these trips with other clubs result in offers of extra dives through the rest of the season. Personal faves are Nauticat (as mentioned), Spartacat (Tim Bennito), Ocean Soul (Ian Hannes) and Defiant (Paul Childs).



4. USE THE WEB - The internet is a great tool for finding dives. Most of the boats I've mentioned have pages on their websites listing short notice spaces. As well as this there are sites such as www.planadive.co.uk and www.divernet.com that show listings from skippers, there is also an open-to-all e-mail list called NDG where spaces are offered (details at www.drogon.net) and an invite-only list called Wrecktech (let me know if you want to join). These 2 lists are fairly active through the summer with divers from all over the country advertising spaces.

So there it is, you have no reason not to get diving this season!

RIBs

Eclipse:	Selsey	07780-958-492
		www.dive-eclipse.co.uk
Big Blue 2 and Stormforce RIB's:	Wittering	01243-673-494
		www.witteringdivers.co.uk
Copperhead Diver:	Littlehampton	07801-511-135
		www.copperhead-diving.co.uk

Hardboats

Nauticat:	Brighton	07970-674-799
		www.channeldiving.com
Spartacat:	Brighton	01273-586-445
		www.spartacat.co.uk
Defiant:	Littlehampton	01903-739-090
		www.divevoyager.freemove.co.uk

Others

Boat Bookings, nationwide:	www.deepsea.co.uk
Boat Bookings, Weymouth:	01305-760-888
	www.oldharbourdivecentre.co.uk
Breakwater Hotel Boat Bookings, Portland:	01305-860-269
	www.divedorset.com
NDG list (including archives):	www.drogon.net
Many other boat links can be found at:	www.dive50.freemove.co.uk/croydon_links.htm

SCAPA FLOW

(Alan Glen)

Greetings,

I am going up to Orkney to dive in Scapa Flow for trip number 11 this year. Yet again I have booked a live aboard trawler and have 11 people in the team.

The boat is called Sunrise and is converted to 6 Twin cabins down below and plenty of saloon space and also space for dry changing and wet kitting up and de-kitting.

At the end of WW1 the entire German High Seas fleet was disarmed and dispatched to a rendezvous in the North Sea where it surrendered itself to the Royal Navy. It eventually arrived in Scapa Flow. Many of the ships were not in line of sight so there was a slow procedure for relaying orders around the fleet.

All radios having been removed and destroyed. The allies kept the German fleet in the dark as far as the armistice negotiations were going, however a time came when Admiral Von Reuter felt that his fleet was sure to be taken by the allies.



On 21 June 1919 Admiral Von Reuter gave the signal. "paragraph 11 confirm... " A prearranged signal to the 74 ships under his command and the officers then opened the scuttling valves having damaged water tight doors etc. The rest is history and very interesting history at that.....

Between the wars the majority of the ships were salvaged and raised and indeed much of the high grade Krupps armour was sold back to Germany in the 30's to be turned into U boats for WW2.

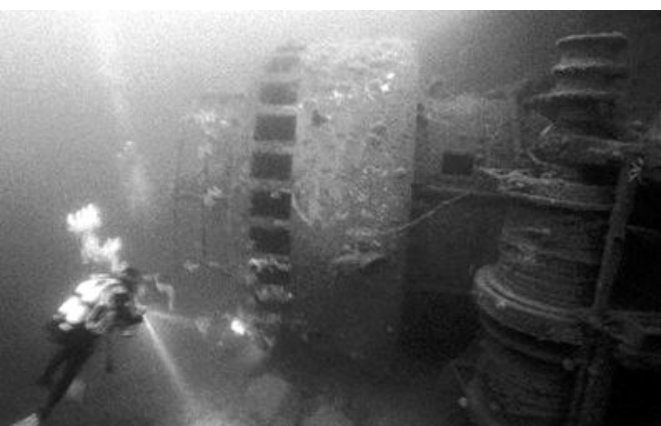
There are 3 battleships, and 4 cruisers left where they sank and also several block ships which are deemed by many to be among the best dives in the Northern Hemisphere. Depths range between 48 m to 15 m. The water temp. is usually about 10 Degrees Centigrade and the viz. is always much better than the toxic sludge that we normally dive in on the south coast. There are several other wrecks and remains of wrecks.



The wreck of the Royal Oak is in Scapa Bay and is a war grave with 800 odd people still on board. The skipper I use is one of the few commercial divers who is allowed to dive on it. This year, as before he will be engaged in removing the remains of the bunker fuel oil from the wreck before it leaks out in a rush when the wreck collapses. The Royal Oak is on its side and it is only 6 meters to the side of the hull.



The Cruiser that we usually dive on first is called the Karlshue which is in 24 m. and because it is one of the shallowest of the German wrecks it has seen a lot of action from the salvage men. It is a bit of a mess with large pieces still recognisable as ship shape. The rest of the wrecks are all much more intact however they have all been visited by the salvage men at some stage. The battleships are all deeper and are all upside down as they capsized as they sank.



There are several good books on the Grand Scuttle as well as the salvage attempted between the war.



I shall be only too happy to indulge further in tales of Scapa Flow, however there is another attraction in Orkney.

I usually go to Orkney near the summer solstice and this means that there are many hours of daylight. The length of the day means that night dives are out.....



Orkney seems to be uniquely covered by sites from the Neolithic age. There is a stone age village that was uncovered in a great storm in the 1800's when a load of sand dunes blew away exposing stone houses with stone seats, shelves and bed, a truly awesome artefact from 5000 years ago. There are also standing stones and also an old tomb with a passage that is aligned with the midday sun on the winter solstice. In fact the rotation of the earth has changed somewhat in 5000 years and sun does not shine directly where it did all those years ago.



We always visit these sites after the diving and last year I visited a site that I have not seen before. This was called the Tomb of the Eagles. We were able to handle pottery from over 5000 years ago in the interpretive centre.

Another diving attraction is a dive site which is 40 miles due west of Orkney, about 7 hours steaming depending on the tide. Stack Skerry is a rock that rises up from the floor of the North Atlantic and has a split down the middle, to the sea floor. This is where parts of the wreck of the Menina lie.

Last time we visited this we all got bored looking at yet another dolphin / porpoise etc but the diving was spectacular. The viz was similar to the Red Sea. Last time I was there we raised a stainless steel propeller blade that was carried as deck cargo. We used a 1 ton lifting bag that took 2 cylinders to fill it. EPIC.



Every Scapa Flow holiday is different and I must say I look forward to this coming one in July. Perhaps you might think of joining in next year.....?



STOP PRESS!!!

Since writing this article a number of people have pulled out of this year's Scapa Flow trip.

If you are interested in going then contact Alan on 0208 696 0027





In the first of a regular series, **Uncle Scubbie**, the club's resident DIW divers discusses DIW principles of equipment configuration. This system has taken years to evolve and has many strict followers, though not all realise they are DIW divers.

EQUIPMENT CONFIGURATION

Setting up your diving equipment for efficient and practical diving can take years to accomplish, and the move to a technical set-up can cause even greater problems. But divers who dive the 'Way' divers have come together to formulate a standard configuration to help all divers to DIW perfection.



As the transition can be difficult for the average recreation diver the kit configurations have been broken down into simple areas, Tanks, BCD, REGS, Gauges and weights. Each section will explain the optimal configuration for the prospective DIW diver, together with the reasoning behind each configuration.

We start our journey to DIW with cylinders.

Primarily two tanks are better than one, preferably of the same size. This will allow greater gas capacity, which will increase dive time and safety margin, as we all know. This does come at a cost in weight and some say drag, although that can be overcome, as we shall see later. Both tanks should be mounted equally, i.e. manifolded together on one's back which is the most common place, although nothing is stopping you from chest mounting, often called gut-mounted for men or the suckling positioning for women.

The position of the actual tanks needs to be carefully adjusted so that they are not parallel to each other. They require to be tapered, with the narrower end towards the rear, and the manifold end spread further apart, thus producing a V shape. This is for two reasons, firstly this is to reduce the drag. Contrary to popular belief, this is the most hydrodynamic design. Look at a fish or shark and you will see it has a tapered design, it is not a consistent thickness all the way through, this is to reduce drag and water flow. The common belief that the arrow is a more efficient shape than the V is proven wrong if you look at fish. If God had thought the arrow was more hydrodynamic he would have made Fish and Sharks arrow shaped, but God and millions of years of evolution have made fish and sharks fish and shark shaped, fat headed tapering to small bums/ fins. Thus your twin set should be set up at a V shape.



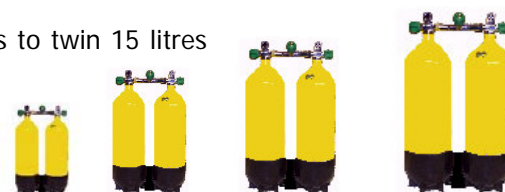
Parallel tanks - wrong



V Shaped tanks - right

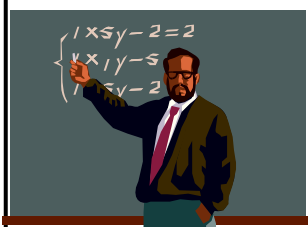
The second reason for the V shape is that when your manifolds blow, and they will if the practice of over filling continues in dive shops, your tanks will shoot out off your back (or front) missing your head (or breast). If they are straight then you will get two 12 litres tanks in the back of your head (breast).

Back mounted is most commonly used, with sizes ranging from twin 7litres to twin 15 litres and even twin 21 litres for very extreme causes of gas guzzling.



Twin cylinders- available in different sizes

When selecting a twin set you should carefully consider which set to buy and this can be worked out as detailed in the following formula.



$$TS = \{ 2 * ACLD / DPTH * (PS - WMF) / MTW * GR \} - OTIS$$

Where

TS = Twin set

ACLD = Air Consumed Last Dive

DPTH = Depth

PS = Pocket Size (to the nearest £100 pounds)

WMF = Wife Moan Factor (when confronted with price of Twin Set)

MTW = Mates Twin Set factor (what twin set he/she has)

GR= The Gullibility Ratio (number of club members divided by the ones stupid enough to carry your kit for you)

OTIS = the Only Twin set In the Shop

Further if the GR (Gullibility Ratio) is zero or a negative number then a further factor need to be introduced, the CIBACI or Can I Be Arsed to Carry It.

As you can see there are many outside influences to be considered when purchasing a twin-set, and the WMF can throw a spanner in the works.

However once you have decided upon your set you will need to specify a Manifold and to slob or not to slob knob it.

When choosing a manifold the first consideration is whether the knobs match, and are they all tactile. A non-feeling knob is a very bad thing, a good know is very easy to turn on, where as playing with a bad one can lead to calluses and still nothing coming out. Spotting a good knob is a very difficult although the ladies with their more delicate hands can spot them easily, whilst men seem to have a problem spotting a good knob from a bad one. But regardless size is not the main importance. The addition of a slob-know allows the diver to fiddle with his/her chosen knob from a natural position rather than from behind.

Slob-Knobs: for lazy/inflexible people



Some divers like to place a small cage over the tops of their tanks as a method of protection. This is not necessary, as the air will still escape through the gaps.

When choosing a manifold chose one with plenty of o-rings. Cages: not necessary Avoid ones with a single o-ring at each end as your are bound to find that some plonker will lift you set by the manifold and thus break the ring seal and leak all that gas out.



O-Rings: you'll need lots



Pillar Valves: you'll need two

Finally, many people question whether to have a Din or A-clamp style valve, well neither is really important. If you are given the choice by your local shop (very rare) either toss a coin or have one of each, as you do need two.



Until Next time this is Uncle Scubbie signing out....



Here is a diving riddle for us all:

Question: If the Expedition Officer pulls someone off, then who pulls off the Expedition Officer?

Answer: Its the almighty Diving Officer of course!

But what.....

Question: Who pulls of the Diving Officer?

Answer: There is only one person fit for this job. Selflessly the Diving Officer pulls himself off.

Narked



DIVER OF THE MONTH

This issue we welcome back Diver of the Month. For those of you who are or are new to the club, or have poor memories, Diver of the Month is awarded to individuals who manage to botch up in the most spectacular fashion.

Not unsurprisingly there are always many strong contenders each month, and it is hard to decide on a winner for this prestigious award.

As it has been some time since Diver of the Month was awarded this issue we have an awards special, with awards given in a variety of categories. Some names seem to crop up more than once, showing how committed some are to winning this award. Next issue we return to regular Diver of the Month, so feel free to make as many entries as you can.

INTERNATIONAL AWARD

A number of strong contenders have emerged for the International award. A special mention has to go to Chris Boddington, who spent two years abroad sharing dive skills (amongst other things) with our foreign friends.



However, the two strongest nominees for this award are:

Ben Stock for managing to throw his log book over the side of the sun deck on the Excel and being too slow running down the stairs to prevent it slowly sinking to the bottom of the Red Sea; and **Andy Hart** who boarded one of the Excel's RIBs early one morning along with four other member of the club. After a short ride to the dive site the crew rolled off the RIB in text book fashion and started their decent. At least four of them did. Andy remained at the surface and decided to reboard the RIB to return to Excel to collect his weightbelt.

The International Award goes to.....**Andy Hart!** Well done Andy.

DRUNKEN BEHAVIOUR AWARD

There have been many strong contenders for this popular award. **Paul B & Paul C** made their now customary entry on the plane to the Red Sea ('no more gin, we'll have a bottle of champagne each then'). **Chris G** made a strong contribution on Sunday in Plymouth this year, so committed was he to winning this award that he was forced to sit out the deeper dive the next day in preference to a shallower one, as he was very hungover. **Paul B, Paul C, Chris G & Ben** had a few too many at the Christmas bash and came up with some frankly odd ideas for how to pass the time between dives on a liveaboard holiday ('we could each take a section of Scalextric track...'). Amongst a few others **Tony & Dennis** had a day long drinking session after a frankly f-ing cold dive at Stoney Cove in February, despite their insistence for hours that the next drink would be the last; the same pair made a similar effort at Plymouth.

But there can only be one winner, or rather four. Our intrepid crew decided to have a nice day out at the Dive Show this March. Having spent 7 hours at the dive show, a good 15 minutes of which was actually spent looking around the show, the group decided to stop in the pub on the way to the station for another quick drink. Having somehow managed to wrangle their way into a free-bar for the exhibitors, they hid their bags and set about having as many drinks as they could get. After a few hours the now drunken crew headed for home via a pub at London Bridge and a curry house. So drunk where they that one forgot where they lived and another was up in the early hours of the next day to pay a visit to the porcelain fairy. Good work!!



THE SMB DEPLOYMENT AWARD

This award goes to the individual who has made the hardest work of sending an SMB to the surface during a dive. Most members of the club have made a strong entry for this award at some point, making this a tough one to win. Recent(ish) entries for this trophy have included:

Dennis: who deployed his SMB after a dive on the James Egan Layne this Easter. Having made a nice ascent to their six meter stop Dennis and his buddy were surprised to find a line appear between them. But not as surprised as they were to see that the line was connected to Dennis's reel and was sadly lacking an SMB.

Ben: who not only managed to lose his reel and SMB in the Red Sea (the more observant of you may have spotted a trend there....), but managed to take an age to deploy his SMB from the six meter platform at Wraysbury.

Jamie: who on a dive out of Plymouth sent her SMB up, only for it to decide that life at the surface was dull and head back down to meet her on the way up.

Chris Griffiths: earns a nomination for his strange obsession with his delayed aid.

Paul C: our DO is well versed in the deployment of an SMB, however even he can still make the odd mistake. At Plymouth last year he sent the SMB up in text book fashion except for the one (minor) detail, hanging on to the reel. Then there was the five minutes or so it took him to deploy his SMB on the six meter platform at Wraysbury as well.

Chris Boddington: whose fascination with strange kit is well known, and seems to have grown worse during his travels. It appears he has bought a Japanese reel used for both line laying and sending up and SMB. There is a switch on the reel to select the mode, I'm sure you can all guess what happens if you are on the surface and let go of the reel with it still in 'free' mode - yes, a reel heading for the bottom as fast as it can.



All clearly need more practice, but there can only be one winner and that has to be **Paul C**, whose exploits in Wraysbury are still on video for those who don't believe it can take that long.

DRIVER OF THE MONTH

No, not a spelling mistake, this award goes to a member who has displayed his prowess behind the wheel. A special mention goes to **Paul C** for his efforts to pounce a lift at every opportunity, however his attitude towards this seems to have changed since taking on the DO role and not only has he taken a turn at driving to Plymouth but he gave me a lift to Stoney (cheers!).



Alan Lawrence has made a strong entry to this category. Alan's driving style could be described as 'speedy' and he has scared the cr*p out of a few people who were brave (foolish) enough to get in a car with him. And lets not forget his speeding ticket for misbehaving around Plymouth. However, **Chris Griffiths** wins this award by a mile. Chris decided to save up and buy himself a nice Porsche. Unfortunately his dream car managed to last a mere 10 days before he lost control at a roundabout and spun its rear-end into a lamppost, writing it off. That the police officer who responded to the call allowed him to keep his breathalyser test tube added insult to injury!

THE 'DON'T REALLY WANT TO BE HERE' AWARD

Again another tough choice, with the 'lets go to Stoney in February' crew putting in a strong effort. However, the clear winners are **Paul C, Chris B & Ben** who took a trip to Wraysbury for a pre-season warm up. Having already taken an age to get there, with a lot of faffing about on the way (collecting cylinders, filling up with petrol, getting money) our intrepid divers took around an hour and a half to kit up. Some divers actually got in for their second dives while our lot put cylinders on BC's, attached regs and assembled video cameras all as slowly as humanly possible. In their defence the kitting up was slowed by two rather attractive girls getting changed in a car about 20 yards away!

Our group then spent half an hour conducting what can only be described as an awful dive. First one of the group, having boasted of the number of dives he had already done that year, forgot to turn his air on. The buddy system was ignored to the full. As much as the bottom that could be kicked up was, and it is reported that the visibility is only now starting to recover. They spent an age wondering what some strange concrete construction could be but couldn't tell due to the poor visibility caused by their bumbling around (possibly a sewage outlet?!). They wrote on the side of a bus. Two of them took an age to deploy SMBs, one each despite being not a metre from each other or a shot line, slowed by the laughing at the other who had decided to stick a traffic cone on his head. They even threw in a 3 minute stop at 3 metres (having left the 6 metre platform) just to show they could.

They then threw any suggestion of a second dive away, packed up in record time and headed for home. It's clear their hearts just weren't in it!



THE 'IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE' AWARD

Andy Bennett made a strong entry this Easter, with a suspected bend that got a few hearts racing (ok, just his). After serious consultation with an experienced diver, who carefully studied the symptoms and assessed the situation, it turned out to be case of suit squeeze. Simple mistake.

Scott Dillon is another to make a good entry, managing to be sea sick on what was possibly the flattest sea ever out of Brighton.

The jury is out on his defence of a dodgy bacon sandwich.

There was only ever going to be one winner though. Whilst the exact symptoms and causes are still not clear, **Roy Edgerton's** bend/migraine this Easter wins the award by some distance. On a serious note though, get well soon Roy - we need somebody to hold that clipboard!



THE 'NEEDS TO USE A DIARY' AWARD

A mention here for somebody who is not a member of the club, but instead gave a talk at a dry function. **Innes McCartney**, who eventually gave a talk on his book, after double booking us for the original date and then attempting to postpone the second because of a rugby game. He generally caused a lot of grief for the eventual winner...

...**Dave Elphick**. Who is well known for his 'relaxed' approach to time keeping generally. It now appears he needs to pay more attention to the date as well though, having forgotten this year was a leap year! Congratulations though to him and Claire (who must be mad!) and we all look forward to a few drinks after the wedding!



SEA LIFE ABUSER AWARD

Whilst **Kevin Stickland** may think that this award is his for the taking there have been some strong contenders recently.

Alan Lawrence: who on the last dive of the Plymouth weekend collected some of the smallest scallops ever seen (and he kept them!)

Paul Brown: who if anything managed to beat Alan's collection of small scallops with three tiny little things that most would have struggled to have seen on a dive out of Brighton, but at least he had the decency to throw them back.

Ben Stock: who spent a dive on the Mixon Hole attempting to get himself a crab (of the edible kind). Having spent most of the dive teasing a number of crabs, and failing miserably to catch one, his buddy took pity and gave him a hand.

But the winner is **Bruce Ayres** who having caught his first crab last year developed a taste for them. He bought himself a crab hook which now strikes fear into everything that sees him with it under the water, including his buddy. Attempting to get a conger into his goody bag may have been a little optimistic though.



THE 'WHERE'S MY TOWEL' AWARD (sponsored by O'Three)

This is awarded to the individual whose dry suit would be more accurately described as a semi-dry at best. This is possibly one of the toughest awards to win and there have been many fine entrants.

Tony: Our former DO was unfortunate to get a soaking at Weymouth, after somebody didn't quite do the zip on his dry suit all the way up. To say he wasn't happy would be somewhat of an understatement.

Jamie: who, whilst down in Falmouth, decided that putting a finger nail through a neck seal, nicely ripping it, would make her suit look far more fashionable.

Ben: another who relies on O'Three to fail to keep him dry at every opportunity.

Paul C: who has recently started to regret boasting that his O'Three has never let him down.

Roy: his Poseidon suit has never quite kept him dry, though it

Chris B: purchased himself a nice new Otter. That the water proved to be a little inconvenient, so its already back in the shop

but there could only be one winner and that is **Alan Lawrence** Plymouth trip showed that the thing leaked more than your av-drain the water back out. Then, at Littlehampton, it was found impossible to do up. Alan's response? He asked somebody to all the way when it was time to get out. Rumour that he will be soaked on a regular basis!



doesn't seem quite as bad as when he first bought it.

comes in through his auto-dump like it was a tap has for repairs.

who got a second hand suit this year. Unfortunately the erage colander, and Alan was regularly seen trying to that the zip had decided to break, making it nearly force it shut so he could dive that day, and to not open it using that zip for some time yet, so he can expect to get