

# The Muddy Puddle

September 2005

## Welcome!

Well, here I am again. Despite thinking that the June issue would be my last as acting Editor it seems that Ben has well and truly taken his work home with him: Not only does he do nothing whilst in uniform, he also shirks all other responsibilities outside of the Old Boys Network we call the Metropolitan Police! He'll probably be asking the hard working taxpayer to pay his club membership next year too!!

The last few months have seen a hive of activity on the diving front, with the club running very successful trips to Sark and Weymouth as well as to our usual haunts of Brighton, Eastbourne and the Isle of Wight. You can read about several of these trips on pages 7 and 12 along with a write up of my non-club trip to Scapa Flow on page 4. Also, our man in Asia, Mr Chris Boddington, gives us a run down of his recent trip to Komodo, dragons'n'all (page 18)!

Elsewhere in this issue are the exploits of Clare Walton and Jaime Dawson on their BSAC Combined Nitrox Course (page 21) where it's safe to say they caused a bit of a stir....who'd have thought it eh? Still, they both passed and congrats to them for that – that's two more on the Devil Gas, trimix next girls?

The next major event for the club is the Annual General Meeting, to be held at the Burn Bullock, Mitcham on 7<sup>th</sup> November at 7.30pm. We all know that the AGM can be a bit of a chore, but this is **YOUR** club and the AGM is the chance to let your opinions be known and to point us in the right direction for the coming season. It is also an opportunity to get boozed up and go for a curry and I know most of you need little encouragement for that!!! There are more details regarding the AGM on page 2. I am also please to say plans are afoot for the Christmas bash, more details soon!!!

Enjoy!!  
Paul



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## DO's Drivel



***Sorry, due to holidays and general laziness this editions DO's Drivel has been cancelled...***

### Upcoming Dives

**18 September**

Nauticat,  
*Fortuna*, 33m

**FULL**

**2 October**

Wight Diver  
*Polo*, 30m

**FULL**

**16 October**

Nauticat  
*Wreck TBA*, 35m

**2 Spaces**

Contact Paul Brown to book.

### NOTICE OF CROYDON BSAC 23 AGM

The club's 2005 Annual General Meeting will be held on **Tuesday 8th November** at the **Burn Bullock pub, 315 London Rd, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4 4BE**. The meet time is 7.30pm for an 8pm start. The meeting usually lasts about 2 hours.

This is a slight break from the traditional last-Monday-in-October, as several people are away and availability at the pub wasn't good. Should you wish to stand for a committee position, please complete the form at the end of this newsletter or let me know asap. Seats on the committee are as follows:

Chairman  
Diving Officer  
Training Officer  
Membership Secretary  
Treasurer  
Expeditions Officer  
Equipments Officer  
Dry Officer

Also, if there is a motion or matter that you wish to have on the agenda rather than dealt with in Any Other Business, please let me know.

Please please please make the effort to attend - this is **YOUR** club and if we are to keep going and providing a service for the members then we need your input and help.

Usually a group of us go out for a curry afterwards, a tradition that I'm sure will continue this year.

Regards  
Paul  
Chairman

## Training Officer's Report

Just a short bulletin to let everyone know how things are going on the training front.

Steve and Chris started as beginners and are both virtually Sports divers. Steve has only the theory test to do. Rick and Ian have completed the Sports Diver lectures and have to do the Theory test. All three will be doing the test imminently.

Roy Parris passed the Ocean Diver theory test and will make further progress when he gets a wet or dry suit. Maria passed the Ocean Diver theory too and is about to have her first open water outing at Horsea Island on the 17th Sept.



Recently I contacted all the people who had the Dive Leader lectures earlier in the year with a view to running the Dive Leader Rescue Scenarios at Wraysbury. Virtually no positive responses from club members for several reasons.

As usual, I am at your disposal for training and increasing skill levels. I shall be continuing to deliver Sports Diver lectures to Maria and Roy in the near future. Victor might also like to join in. Others are also welcome to join in.

I shall also start a series of Dive Leader lectures again probably on a 1 lecture each evening basis as I do with Ocean and Sports lectures.

In the near future, the BSAC try a Dive event will be upon us. This may well bring in a crop of new club members with a lot of new enthusiasm etc for the club.

Several people have expressed an interest in doing the Instructor Foundation course, more of this later.

To conclude, there is a lot of training happening. Let me know what I can do for you and feel free to help out in the pool as the job is getting bigger.

## Wick/Scapa 2005



The plan for our week in Wick was fairly simple – drive to Orkney, get on the boat, scoot down to Wick, do a load of cracking diving, steam back to Orkney and come home, easy eh? The only thing is that the weather decided to play a part...but it didn't spoil it too much!

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> May saw me, your tubby Chairman, packing the car ready for a week of trimix diving based in Wick. For those of you that don't know Wick (which I expect is everyone) it is a small fishing port just south of John O'Groats in the far north of Scotland. Hardly any diving is done here and we actually had to use a boat based in Scapa Flow, Orkney to take us down there. So once I was loaded I was away, ready for a long drive north. I say long, but this was LONG – door to door 25 hours from leaving the badlands of Streatham to boarding the MV Karin, our home for the week.

The plan was to leave Scapa Flow and journey down to Wick diving in the 60m-70m range then head back for our last dive, the HMS Pheasant, which lies outside Scapa Flow off the Old Man of Hoy. The wrecks in this area are rarely dived and (mostly) the boat we were on is the only one that travels down there. The MV Karin is a large converted trawler owned and skippered by the very amiable John Thornton (a highly experienced skipper and technical diver). She is a very stable dive platform but is, like all UK liveaboards, rather "functional". Still, the bunks were OK and the kettle worked (most of the time), so we were set. On arriving in Stromness it was clear that we would not be diving outside of the Flow the next day, this was something of a disappointment as these were not the dives we had planned. Still, "stay positive" I thought, its not often you have 24,000 ton battleships as the back up plan!!!



Saturday came and saw us heading out to the wreck of the Margraf, one of the 7 German ships that are left at the bottom of Scapa Flow after the German High Seas Fleet was scuttled there. Things were a little awkward as I had gas for a 70m dive in my twinset which I didn't want to waste on a 46m dive, no problem though as I was able to use my stage bottle of 37% for this dive – easy! The wreck itself is huge, a really impressive sight. I had visited Scapa Flow a couple of times before, but the sheer size of the wreck still left me awestruck. Visibility was in the region of 8-10m and temperature was a chilly 9-10 degrees. A pleasant bumble around the wreck ended with a bit of a drama when one of the other divers thought he'd lost his buddy inside, all was well though and we all got back on board happy.



The second dive of the day was the Brummer. For this dive I actually had a buddy, Greg (a West Spam fan who was diving an Inspiration) which was a rarity this week. The Brummer is another of the German Ships, but is a "light cruiser". As these were smaller and less heavily armed than the battleships (like the Margraf) all 4 of the light cruisers in the Flow lie on their sides rather than having turned turtle. There was an abundance of life on this wreck, particularly invertebrates such as starfish, squat lobsters, anemones and crabs. Once again I was doing the dive on my stage, so I had to ascend a little earlier than Greg, but still managed a decent length dive.

Monday arrived and we were, unfortunately, still in the Flow. Good news though! The weather was getting better and we'd be heading to Wick in the afternoon to do a deeper dive on Tuesday. This lifted everyone's spirits a bit, which was lucky really because Monday's dive was the Strathgarry. This is the wreck of an old tug that lies in Hoxa Sound at a depth of 58m. The wreck was about as interesting as it sounded – a tug. Think "Stangarth" in Stoney Cove and you get the idea. After this we made the 3-ish hour steam to Wick where we were to berth for the night before heading out to the Clan McKinlay on Tuesday.



We awoke on Tuesday to more wind – great. It turned out that a gale was coming in so we had to get out and dive and then head back to Scapa Flow. We trundled out to the Clan McKinlay (which is only about 8 miles from Wick) in a slightly rough sea having heard from John tales of the gear that had come up off the wreck. The news that the bell was still down there certainly got me up for it.....Once on site, the shot line and deco station were deployed and it was time for the off. I was to be diving with Greg again. I was going to do about 25mins and he was going to stay a little longer. On jumping in I knew the vis would be good, but it wasn't until I got to the bottom and my eyes adjusted I realised quite how stunningly brilliant it was! I would say the vis was certainly over 15m and in front of me was an upright but battered wreck on a white shingle seabed. My depth at this point was 67m. We had planned to line off of the shot as we had to return to the deco station and so I got my line reel out and tied on (to be honest this wasn't really needed as the vis was so good, but as the saying goes: plan the dive, dive the plan). The shot was lying on the port side of the wreck, so from here we swam across over towards the starboard side. Half way across and Greg saw a porthole lying under a plate, so after spending a couple of minutes tying a lift bag on we sent it up and were away.

On reaching the starboard side we turned right and headed towards the stern. There were several bits of unidentifiable brass and plates scattered about, along with some fish life (sorry – have know idea what they were, I was more interested in the wreck!!). We reached what I thought was the wheelhouse and as Greg went in one room I swam up over the top to look down in the holes in the roof. As Greg joined me I looked down and below me was a large brass ships telegraph. I dumped



the reel into Greg's hands and dropped down through a fairly small hole in the roof into the room. I tried to pick the telegraph up, but it was far too heavy for me to lift, so I began to roll it out towards the doorway. On reaching the door I realised there was a 4 inch lip that the thing needed to be lifted over, but despite my attempts I just couldn't lift it over. As my time was running down (as was my gas!) I had to leave it.....I'll be back for it though! The rest of the dive involved following the line back and a fair whack of deco. Post dive involved chatter about what a great dive it was (and it certainly was) and a lot of piss-taking from the other divers that I hadn't got the telegraph.

Wednesday came and we were back in Scapa Flow, having travelled back straight after the dive on the Clan McKinlay. The wind was up and even in the Flow it was fairly lumpy, which was a real downer for us as rather than spending a week in Wick we'd actually only got one dive! We headed out to the James Barrie, another small wreck, not far from the Strathgarry, but a little shallower at 42m. This wreck is completely intact and lies on it's

starboard side in an area that traditionally has good visibility. She is not big and can easily be seen, swum through and gotten bored with in a 30min dive.

For a second dive we went to another of the German wrecks, the Kronprinz Wilhelm. She is another Battleship and has (as with the other two battleships) turned turtle. She is a little more broken though and so there is more to see. I think this is the better of the three battleships and made for a fairly interesting dive, however, the effects of four days of diving were kicking in and I was feeling pretty knackered so didn't particularly enjoy this one.



Thursday = more wind!!!! Aaahhhhhh this was getting annoying. We only got to do a single dive as it was so lumpy, this was probably a good idea though as we had a deep one planned for Friday. We headed out to the Coln, another light cruiser lying on its side. I managed to cover the length of this awesome wreck without seeing another diver. Again there was plenty of life and there are some great swim-throughs and holes to get in, the guns are also still in place. One has a plaque on the end of the barrel in memory of a woman who died on the wreck a few years ago. A sobering thought.

Friday and this was it, the dive that we had all wanted to do. We headed out west from Stromness turning south as we exited the Flow and headed down past the Old Man of Hoy. The sea was glassy smooth and black as ink, the sun even came out for a while! Once on site the shot went in and the deco station was deployed for the last time that week.



As slack came the whole team was ready, I jumped in on the second pass and could see the shot disappearing down in front of me. The vis was excellent. I stopped at 20m to swap from my travel mix (40% nitrox) on to my bottom gas (15/50 trimix) and to check that nothing was leaking, once this was done I carried on down. At 55m I reached the point where the decompression station was clipped on to the shotline. From here I could actually see the wreck and the divers that were already on it at a depth of 80m, this was quite simply the best visibility I have ever encountered in the UK (and is better than I have often had in the Red Sea).

On reaching 75m I clipped off my strobe to the shotline and headed off to the wreck. Whilst not as intact as I was expecting, she was absolutely littered with brass artefacts. 4 inch shell cases covered the floor, I spotted portholes, brass winding wheels, lamps, gauges and a host of bits and bobs I couldn't identify. I swam over the main body of the wreckage watching the other divers filling lift bags and generally bumbling about. Once my eyes adjusted I would say vis was well over 25m – I was completely awestruck. My 18mins of bottom time came round all too quickly and as I started my ascent I looked back on the wreck knowing it was one of the best dives I've ever done.

After 97minutes I was back on the surface and climbing the ladder with a big grin on my face, as did the rest of the team. The last diver hit the surface having done a whopping 145mins in the 9 degree water (for a 25min bottom time) and we headed back to Stromness for an afternoon in the pub to celebrate. This was a cracking week's diving and for me it completely reinforced why it is worth taking the risk of diving deep. We have already made enquiries about next year's expedition, should any of you have a trimix ticket by then, you are more than welcome to come along.



## Weymouth, July 2005

Crew: Paul B, Paul C, Vicky C, Chris G, Clare W, Rick W

### Friday 15th July

July saw the traditional Weymouth diving weekend, I say traditional – I was looking forward to this trip as it was my first beano with the club – having heard some horror stories since from some members in the club about the usual shenanigans which happen on the longer trips – WestwardBound(.com) anyone?

Most people decided to brave the route out of London on the A3/M3 and I was no exception. Boring and traffic-laden motorway journey there saw me into the digs by early evening. The place was deserted, so I left my car in the cramped car park (trying my best not to damage the Chairman's luxurious motor car) in the last space and headed off to the Red Lion in Hope Square where the others were supposed to be drinking the night away.

Wandered around the Red Lion which seemed to have some weird inverse tardis-effect going on; loads of people outside on the benches in the early Summer sun but hardly any room or space inside. More importantly, there was no sign of any Croydon BSAC divers, not even the chairman, who – as we all know, is hardly difficult to miss. I soon settled down to a pint of Jurassic and gave the fella a call on his mobile just to hear his oh-so-cheery voice on his voice mail. Job done! So I settled into the pub and waited – couple of pints later and the crew appeared post-curry. Paul B explained that his phone had network problems and we got on with chatting about the next couple of days diving. I stayed on for 'one for the road' with Vicky and the non-Croydon crew whilst Clare and the two Pauls headed back up the hill to the digs. Last orders soon came and I trudged back up the road looking forward to the weekend's diving and the promised fine weather.

Unfortunately I had managed to lock myself out of the digs – not that it mattered, Paul B had realised this might happen and asked me to call him on his mobile. However, that was playing games so I had to wake up a patient just-gone-to-sleep landlady up to let me into the room. I don't know what was more of a shock – coming in and seeing the two Pauls and Clare huddled together watching some art-film from Paul C's extensive dvd collection or discovering there was only 3 beds for 4 blokes! Fortunately Chris G wasn't arriving until the next day so I didn't have to worry about that and dropped off to sleep.

### Saturday 16th July 05 – the "Pommeranian"

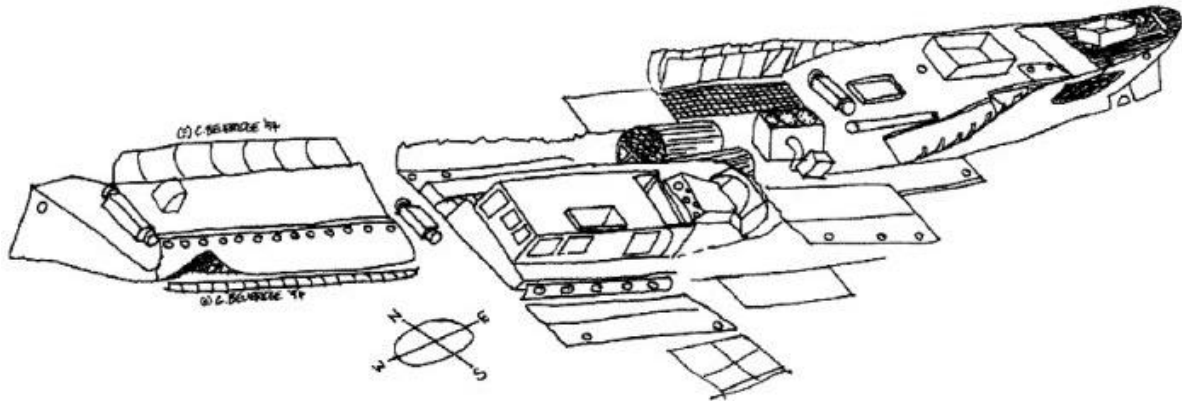
The crew was up early for breakfast and despite being on his strict diet Paul B was told off for leaving food and not ordering enough by the landlady. She also moaned at me for getting her up last thing at night and first thing in the morning when I locked myself out after retrieving something from my car. Still, given Chris G was arriving I asked if she could sort out a spare duvet so I could crash on the floor – that improved her mood no end....

The early start saw us pier side to meet the ever-smiling™ Paul Cooper – skipper of Kyarratoo our boat for the weekend

The plan was to dive the Pommeranian, a 4,241 ton Canadian liner built in 1882. During WW1 she was requisitioned by the British government and converted into a general troop/cargo ship. During these duties she was torpedoed on the 15th April 1918 by U-boat UC-77 en-route to New Brunswick, Canada out of London and only 1 of her crew of 56 survived. The wreck is famous for carrying a cargo of 16 old style brass diving helmets – 2 of these have been found but one was lost during recovery – needless to say we didn't find any of the others! She lies in 36m rising 5 m+ off the sandy/rocky sea floor.



Before long we were given the skipper's detailed brief about how to exit his boat with a load shout of 'Get off my fucking boat' – rumours are that BSAC will be updating course materials for standard boat exits in due course.



Now a lot has been said about our Zen diving guru DO (much of it by himself), but I must admit watching him relax prior to the dive. This contrasted markedly with me sweating my nads off trying not to look too much of an idiot in front of him and thinking about not draining my cylinder of air before I reached the bottom.

I needn't have worried – the extra time spent relaxing got my breathing rate down and we soon jumped in with Paul following. I was keen to learn from such an experienced buddy but couldn't understand why he was showing me his foot clear of the water! Was this some new descent technique I hadn't been taught? Needless to say his fins had decided to play up and Paul asked me to go to the shot and wait whilst he sorted out the problem and got a tow back to the line. Finally we started to descend with me following Paul down the shot and onto the wreck. I noticed at the bottom that both his fins had come loose again and a quick tap on the shoulder and we sorted it out on the bottom. We had landed amidships on the cabin area – well I think it was that area from the sketch we had sent before the dive. Anyway, the usual clouds of pouting and pollock covered the wreck but rather than go silly on my first dive with the club we stayed around the deck area at max depth of 33m, mostly shallower and left the wreck after 28 minutes of bimbbling around in 8m viz.

All were back on board talking excitedly about the dive – the dive marshal bit was done and raised eyebrows for Vicky's Suunto throwing her xx mins of stops. Looks like someone spent a little too much time on the bottom and hanging around whilst Chris G cleared his deep stops, not to worry though, that's why your buddy has twins isn't it? So you can switch to it on stops – I'll leave the rest to Narked who ever she/he may be....

Second dive was a drift called "Grove Point" off the east side of Portland; going down the shot and following Paul I realised my suit getting colder and tighter, hmm must be a squeeze, just press this nice little valve – oh crap, that's what a buddy check is for. Finished the descent knowing that I'd made an arse of myself as I couldn't reach round to where the dry suit inflator was. On getting to the bottom tapped Paul on the shoulder and then zipped round him just to confuse him when he turned to see where I was. With the inflator quickly sorted it was on with a very enjoyable drift. Unfortunately Paul's mask was giving him problems so he constantly had to clear his mask - this continued throughout the weekend.

Back to port and we humped all of the cylinders off the boat and into the diveshop. Weymouth looked great coming up into the harbour in the late afternoon sun – never knew what the place was like as I had only been to Portland before. All agreed because of the searing heat it would be best to rehydrate at the Red Lion, one pint quickly turned to three and it was great reluctance that we left to go back to the dig to freshen up before the evening.

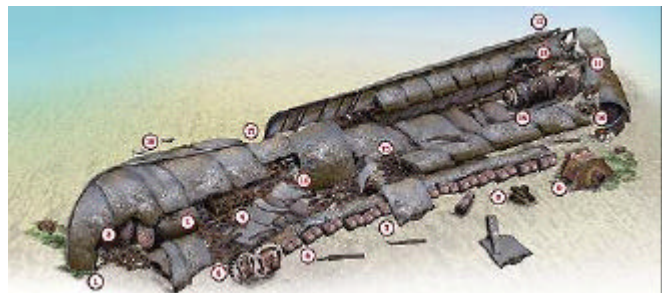


The crew all turned up back at the Red Lion before we split for grub – some had decided to go for the traditional Weymouth Tandoori curry, whilst I joined Clare and Paul B grabbing some takeaway fish and chips. We sat on the harbour wall looking at the boats go by whilst eating them and Clare decided that she must have an ice-cream, what with being at the 'seaside' and having fish and chips. Still, I thought I would regress into childhood even further by getting one of those cheapo 'milk ice lolly' things and was promptly busted by the shop assistant saying they were only meant for children – tasted nice though.

Back to the pub and a couple more beers saw Chris G commenting on Vicky's 'dodgy end' had no idea what he was referring to but after a couple of pints of Jurassic it was the funniest comment in the world. We all staggered back to the digs and Chris G kindly handed out some ear-plugs? Apparently he snores....

### **Sunday 17th July 05 the "St Dunstan"**

Woke up – well when I say woke up I mean more got up after getting no sleep. People, you have been warned! Chris doesn't snore – he is like 15 piledrivers and jackhammers going off at once. Ear plugs? Ear defenders would have been more appropriate. Much moaning at breakfast from the two Pauls and me – we might have looked shit but this was no hangover, it was lack of sleep. Paul B, happy as he normally is, moodily laid plots as to how he was going to repay poor old Chris.



Sunday if anything was even better than Saturday! Flat calm millpond seas on the way to the wreck, a slight haze which made the yellow sand of Chesil Beach in the distance look like the Red Sea with tropical temperatures to match (well it was either that or me hallucinating though lack of sleep). A non-Croydon BSAC diver on the boat said you only get one day a year like this if your lucky, well we had two. The weather was simply fantastic (side note to Tony Ray – it was almost as hot and almost as good a viz as Paul C and I had when we stumbled into you by chance before diving off Brighton later in the year)

Today's wreck was to be the St Dunstan. Apparently this wreck has been done before on previous club Weymouth trips – it seems to be a bit of a favourite and after diving her I can see why. The St Dunstan was built in 1894 as a bucket-dredger and was requisitioned during WW1 to become a converted mine-sweeper and it was in that role that she met her fate, ironically given her role it was by a mine laid by U-boat UC21 on 23rd September 1917.

Dive sheet was sorted out by the dive marshal on the day which saw the birth of Chris G's new nickname 'Slumberland'. On arrival there were two ribs on the St Dunstan waiting for slack. Skipper Paul advised the divers on the two ribs (in no uncertain terms using all the tact he is renowned for) not in any event to get near or move his shot and whatever you do don't even try to ascend on it.

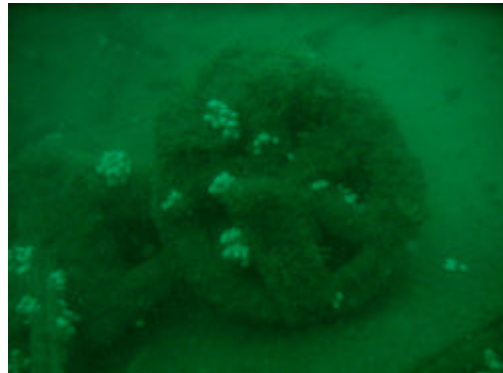
We were all very eager to get in too see what the viz was like as the weather was so good and were not disappointed. Going down the shot we had and easy 8-10m but the activity of the two ribs meant it was kicked up a little on the wreck itself – still it was still a more than respectable 5-8m.

We had a great tour and managed to see most of the wreck. As the Divernet wrecktour picture shows she is upside down but there is enough big open swim throughs to enjoy and lots of recognisable bits of machinery (ok I lied lots of bits I recognised because I read the Wrecktour). She lies in 29-30m and rises a good 5m from the seabed. Life was everywhere again with the usual pouting and pollock in huge numbers, but most impressive sight for me was being still next to some hull plating using our torches to indicate a massive pair of lobster claws poking out of some wreckage inside the hull. Then the thing moved, given we were a few metres above it looking down it looked huge, I can't guess the size but reckon it must have been bit of an old one.

Heading back and before sending up the blob we came across Paul B who was looking for Clare, we saw her earlier taking some rubbish green photos (left) which are nowhere near as good as the Diver ones. Still with a bit more practice I am sure she will get some good ones! Paul and Clare were soon reunited to carry on their dive.



The end of the dive saw us back at Kyarratoo's shot. We decided to ascend this despite my car driver signal and puffing billy loco driver signals that skip had said not to go up it. Whilst we were ascending at a nice slow place a dive pair below had obviously used the same site to send their blob up – didn't see them but saw a red missile fire past us on the ascent – blimey they go fast! After stops we surfaced to see the ever-smiling<sup>tm</sup> Paul Cooper give Paul C a bollocking for ascending up his shot – sheepishly we got back on the boat and de-kitted. Chris and Vicky came up with some scallops but the dive-police (Paul B) decided since they were about as big as his little finger they were probably a tad undersized and back they went. This was definitely one of my favourite UK dives so far and I can see why people return to do it again when it was as good as this.



Given the heat once all of us were back on board safe and sound we spent the time on the surface interval lazing in the sun. Paul B had earlier banned Slumberland (due to nocturnal crimes) from the lunch of fried bits and pizza Paul had prepared whilst we were diving. Chris didn't seem to mind though and like the rest of us snoozed whilst we moved to the site of the second dive of the day – Lulworth Banks.



This was just the usual drift but helped in that I managed to see so much life – saw Paul C holding onto a turbot which was flapping like crazy, I quickly got my goody bag out only to see my buddy floating down drift. Seemed as if he had managed to get his line tangled up on his fin – it was soon sorted out and we continued drifting lazily along grabbing the odd scallop into our goody bag which was a nice relaxing dive to end a great Weekend's diving (*who on earth made this bloke DO???? Ed*).



On surfacing Skipper Paul turned to Vicky showing her how to schuck scallops and eat them raw saying 'It's got to be throbbing when you put it in your mouth'. Predictably someone replied 'that's not the first time she has been told that'. Back to port and the long drive home on the hell hole that is the M27/M3 which was crawling after such a hot weekend – still managed to find a nice little road through the New Forest for a bit of rally practice.

Will definitely be going on this trip if there is one next year – not too far to get to from London on a Friday night and long enough to feel like a mini-holiday; can whoever is organizing it make sure we get the same weather and viz please.

Would like to thank everyone for making my first trip with the club such fun and for organising the great viz, weather and banter. Finally, special thanks to Paul C for being my buddy; Paul B for organising and Ben for lending me his Kowalski.

Rick Whitby

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## **Next Year's Diving...**

Its that time again where we have to sort out next years diving - the day boats from Brighton and Portsmouth are booked and we have weekends arranged for Plymouth and Weymouth. So - over to you!!! We'll sort out trips wherever you fancy going - to give you a few ideas here are a few venues we've visited before: Farnes, St Abbs, Dover, Poole, Weymouth, Bridport, Exmouth, Plymouth, Falmouth...

Perhaps we could try somewhere new - Salcombe? Torquay? North Cornwall? Pembrokeshire? there are a plethora of venues we could try, so if there is anything that takes your fancy, or if you'd like to take responsibility for organizing a trip, let me know.

Paul Brown

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## **BSAC 'Come & Dive' Try-Dive night 2005...**

**28<sup>th</sup> September 2005**

Once again Croydon BSAC 23 is taking part in BSAC's Come & Dive promotion, where we take in a load of trydivers. As usual we will need lots of help both in the water and poolside, we will need to borrow a good selection of masks and fins too.

If you are available to help please contact Alan Glen who will be coordinating things.

Alan Glen

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## **BSAC South East Region Skill Development Courses 2006...**

The SE Region's list of courses for 2006 is now available on their website, [www.bsac-se.org.uk](http://www.bsac-se.org.uk). These courses are good value and increase your learning whilst improving your practical skills.

**Take a look and get booked on!!!**

## Sark Expedition 2005

For our week away this year I decided to book a week based on Sark in the Channel Islands. This is an area the club has visited before (in 1990 from the liveaboard *MV Maureen*) which I remember as having excellent visibility along with some very good wrecks and scenic dives. So, Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> August saw a crew of Croydon's finest and one non-Croydon diver arrive in Castletown, Portland to board the boat *Protector* – our dive platform for the week. *Protector* is a large RIB that comes tooled up with diver lift, wheelhouse, toilet and (most importantly) a kettle. I had spoken to the skipper of *Protector*, Ivor Jansen, the previous night and we had agreed to head out whatever the weather. The forecast was a 4-5 SW, which meant that the wind would be blowing on our nose all the way out, however, as I reminded the crew "This is an expedition, not a holiday"...

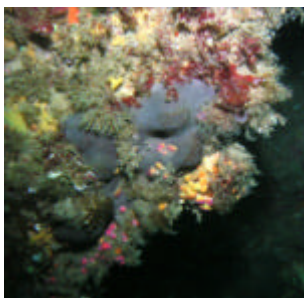


As it turned out the weather wasn't as bad as we thought and although it was a little lumpy it wasn't unbearable. The crossing took around 5½ hours with a quick sandwich and tea stop on Alderney. Once we arrived in Sark we done a brief shakedown dive on a scallop-filled reef just outside Croix harbour, the cloud had come over and although we got an idea of the vis, it was a little dark. On arriving in the harbour, Andy, the owner of Sark Diving Services came down with his tractor (there are no cars on Sark) to pick up our dry-gear and cylinders for filling. This was

when we found out there had been a problem with the digs we had booked. We were expecting a nice cottage that would house the 10 of us and allow us to do our own thing, but we were actually ended up split between a B&B and Andy's house. This wasn't ideal and there were a few glum faces, especially when the heavens opened and we realised we couldn't get anywhere to eat that night. Still, a few beers, a burger and a live band finished the night off and everyone went off looking forward to the week ahead.



Sunday came and was completely different to Saturday, the sun was out, the sea was flat and Sark seemed a better place. The plan for the day was to dive the north side of L'Étac, a large rock stack to the south east of Sark. This was a pretty, scenic dive, which began with a kelpy top and plunged down rocky steps to well over 35m. Life was plentiful and included large numbers of colourful Cuckoo and Ballan Wrasse, this was a nice dive in over 10m of visibility but better was to come! Post dive we had a spot of lunch, changed cylinders and headed over to the Guernsey coast to dive the Oost Vlaanderen, otherwise known as the Cement Wreck. This wreck was downed by the RAF in May 1943 and was part of a convoy travelling to Guernsey from St Malo to supply the occupying German forces, she sank after being struck on the waterline forward of number 1 hold and sank with the loss



of all hands. She now sits in 31m on an even keel and provides an excellent dive. On spotting the wreck, Ivor wasn't happy that the weight was actually in, it was however stuck in something, so myself and Ian went down to either free and send the shot up or to send up a pill to signal that the shot was in. On descending we got to about 15m and could see a wreck in front of us, the shot was stuck right on the stern, hence the lack of a good echo on the sounder. She is sitting upright in 30m with the deck in about 24m. The holds are all accessibly and are home to a abundance of fish life – conga seem to live in most holes and there was a massive shoal of pouting just hanging off the port side. The

wreck in incredibly intact and shows no sign of damage from the bomb that sunk her. Swimming forward we reached the bows where we swam up over the fo'c'sle to do a quick Titianic impression, then it was back towards the stern, annoying conga and trying to grab lobsters as we went. Back at the stern the shot was still in it's hole, so after freeing it and dumping it on the top of the wreck we made our ascent up the line. Once everyone was up, smiling faces covered the boat – this had been a much better day!

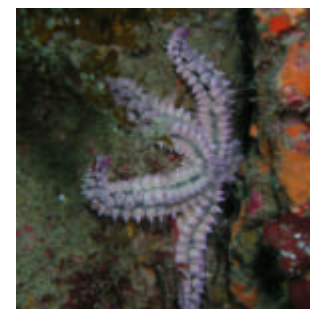


After a semi-drunken BBQ on Sunday night, Monday's dive was to be on a wreck off the Jersey coast, the Shockland. This wreck lies off the south of Jersey and was sunk in 1943 after hitting a reef whilst carrying a cargo of "German troops and French prostitutes", sounded perfect for the club then (Boddington was only saying the night before what he'd like to do



to a German soldier...). She lies on an even keel and in some places her side plates having collapsed in on the decking. Once again, conga seemed to be living in every hole and a huge shoal of Pout hover over the wreck. She is not as bare as the Oost Vlaanderen and is covered in anemones and marine vegetation. There are some excellent swim-throughs on this wreck, should you want to you can do the whole length down each side. There are several artefacts lying around, but nothing worth lifting. Large stacks of steel/iron girders lie in the wreckage and stacks of cement are piled neatly amidships. Up to the bows and another opportunity to do a Kate Winslet impression before working our way all the

way back to the stern to launch the dsmb. Back on the boat and we had more mirror-calm seas for our journey back to Sark, for me, this was the dive of the week. After eating lunch, mending regulators and generally faffing about we were ready for our second dive, again at L'Étac, but this time on the south side. I thought this was a better dive than the north side with more life and what seemed like slightly better visibility. After this we made the short trip back to Sark where we waited about for the bottles to be collected whilst Clare and Jaime went off to fail to find us somewhere to eat. After a bit of useful (ie male) intervention (thanks for that Boddington) we were booked in to a restaurant/hotel for the evening. Getting to the place meant a 10min walk through woods and a field where Rick thought the best way to impress the busty Irish brunette we were all eyeing-up was to fall arse over tit and have me, Bodd, Chris G, the Irish bird and her mate all piss themselves laughing at him. The old smoothy...



Tuesday morning was a little hazy as we woke from our booze induced comas. The plan for the day was, once again, to head over to Jersey to dive the wreck of the Heron. This was yet another medium sized, upright, intact wreck lying in 30m which provided excellent vis.

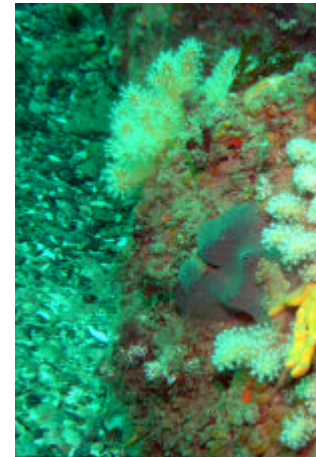


Starting on the Bows, we dropped down into the large hold that followed all the way back to the engine room. Here (with a bit of a squeeze) you could swim around the engine from the stern side and exit at the portside, having seen all parts of the engine sitting there intact. Swimming upwards you can see through doorways and windows into the wheelhouse and swim all the way round a perfectly intact companionway from one side of the vessel to the other. There are several holes here penetration into the wheelhouse is possible, here lie lots of components and a black and white tiled floor. There are two opportunities to from within the wheelhouse to drop down a level into what I think (due to the sinks and



another tiled floor) was the galley. Light shines through five or six portholes on each side of the wreck, most of which still had the covers and glass in (despite my best efforts). Swimming out of the wheelhouse (and managing to finally find my buddy again) we ascended a little on to the roof at about 18m where the tompot blennies and invertebrate life make for an interesting end to the dive. As we'd planned another BBQ for Tuesday night we decided that the second dive should be a scallop run – the less said about that the better though.... Suffice to say we were well fed that night, despite someone chucking a load of booze over the barbie and creating a flame only matched by that in *The Towering Inferno*.

We had planned to only do one dive on the Wednesday and spend the afternoon on Guernsey taking in the sites and taking advantage of the duty free, however, it didn't quite work out like that. We'd planned to dive a wreck in 35m that actually ended up being in 40m, so after a quick change of plan we went to the wreck of the Foyle. Unfortunately we got in too early, this meant that the tide was running like a bitch and made for an unpleasant dive. Oh well, we had the afternoon to look forward to...or not as it happened as we only ended up being in St Peter Port for about an hour - just enough time for a sausage roll and a pint. The disappointment of the day was well made up for in that night's feed – in a cracking little restaurant called Fitz's.



Thursday, and we still had flat seas, sun and vis. What more could you want? First dive was Les Dents, a beautiful reef off the eastern side of Sark, next to the island of Brecqhou. The Barclay's brothers own this small island where, in the late 90's, they built a private castle at a cost of £63 million (Tony priced it, but they went for the cheaper option). As we were approaching, the crew on the boat (a local kid called Jordan) said "just watch, any minute they'll come down to see what we're doing".

Sure enough 5 mins later I saw a little golf cart whizzing down the path – all very Dr No if you ask me. Still, being ruffy-tuffy divers, we didn't let the threat of super-villains intent on world domination put us off – we just got kitted up! Descending to around 30m we were greeted by large rocks that were completely covered in jewel anemones (the luminous colour of these animals never ceases to



amaze me), urchins, vegetation, large wrasse, velvet crabs and the odd pollack. A small current was running, but not enough to make us go in any particular direction, so we just followed our noses. After about 10mins I shone my torch under a rock and sitting there was a huge Crayfish! These are basically very big lobsters without claws. The hole he was in didn't go back very far, so as Ian and I approached he couldn't retreat that much. We waited there letting him use his long tentacles to touch our hands, checking us out. After watching him, mesmerised, for about 5mins we let him be and swam off again. We managed to find a series of high-walled gullies and swim-throughs which, once again, were covered in life. By this time we'd come up to about 18m and had found a wall to follow which broke the surface – this was a truly beautiful dive.

Back to Croix harbour and we packed away the gear. Ivor had received a weather forecast for the next day, which was giving force 6-7 NE for the following day. This meant that the ride home was set to be horrible and a couple of us tried to get booked on to the ferry, which would take

2 hours rather than the 7 Ivor was quoting. As there was no space on the ferry we were all going to be going home on Protector, something that I wasn't looking forward to at all, so we done what all Croydon diver do in a crisis – retire to the pub. That night meant another cracking meal at Fitz's and a couple of jars in the local which finished off the trip nicely.



Friday morning and the wind was up, but not as badly as first predicted, probably a force 6. We left at 11.00am and rocked and rolled out way for about 6½ hours until we got to Portland (going past Alderney was particularly interesting...imagine a wet, cold, no-safety-belt rollercoaster). The whole crew done really well and nobody was sick, a fact that given the conditions was something of a feat. After unloading and some goodbyes we all went our separate ways, some back home and some to get pissed in Weymouth and throw down a few moves on Yates' dance floor...but that's another story.

This really was a cracking week's diving, made all the better by having such a good crew on board. They were (in no particular order):

Chris 'Video Bore' Boddington, Steve 'Firestarter' Little, Chris 'Leopard Thong' Griffiths, Clare 'Lambrini' Walton, Andy 'Adonis' Hart, Jaime 'Early-80's-Villa-Shorts' Dawson, Rick 'What's a DSMB?' Whitby, Ian 'Boon' Mulcahy and me: Paul 'Snakehips' Brown.

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## Sark Quiz

By Tinkerbell

The following questions may or may not relate to actual events on this year's expedition (not holiday) to the Channel Islands...

**1. All trips should begin with the quote:**

- a) This is an expedition not a holiday. You are not suppose to enjoy yourself
- b) Have a fantastic time your on holiday
- c) If I see anyone smiling this week you're in trouble
- d) I still don't know how much the canoes are

**2. Lambrini should be drunk only by:**

- a) Boddingtonese people
- b) Girls who want to have fun
- c) All that laughed at the thought and then drank it
- d) Boys who want to have fun

**3. Skippers love being asked:**

- a) What time is slack water?
- b) What time are we diving?
- c) What time are we diving?
- d) What time is slack water? So what time are we diving?

**4. Things to do before a dive (Northern teacher style):**

- a) Talk non-stop
- b) Take apart kit 10mins before getting into the water
- c) Have your hair teased
- d) Take apart kit 5mins before getting into the water

**5. During a BBQ you must:**

- a) Tend to the BBQ
- b) Forget about the BBQ
- c) Throw a bottle of beer over the BBQ and let someone else rescue the food
- d) Let a girl do the cooking

**6. Crew members should be helpful at all times by:**

- a) Not making tea
- b) Not helping with kitting/dekitting
- c) Running off harbour walls
- d) Cycling off harbour walls
- e) Water skiing
- f) All of the above (the useless little git)

**7. Leopard print thongs should only be worn by:**

- a) Dive girls
- b) The Chairman
- c) The DO
- d) The treasurer late at night opening the door to a dive girl

**8. Bronzed gods should:**

- a) Sit out in the sun at every available opportunity
- b) Take their top off at every available opportunity
- c) Spread low factor sun screen into their bodies seductively
- d) Pout at every opportunity

**9. Essential dive girl kit for a week away should include:**

- a) Hair dryer, hair straighteners, heels, make up and jewellery
- b) Matching earrings for your room buddy
- c) Lambrini
- d) Lemon fanta and beer

**10. Wearing Hugo Boss will lead to:**

- a) Stripping off clothing late at night in the middle of the road
- b) A dive bird sniffing your neck all evening
- c) Becoming Emperor Boddington
- d) A dive girl sleeping in your top

**11. Lack of sock wear leads to:**

- a) The use of insulating tape as a substitute to plasters
- b) Colour coordinated tape and shoe combo
- c) Smelly feet
- d) Tangled hair

**12. Starters in a curry house should be:**

- a) To whet your appetite before the main meal
- b) A chance to try every available starter
- c) Treated as the main meal and fill up on
- d) A chance to try out negotiating skills to gain free food

**13. Entry into Yates should only be attempted by:**

- a) Those qualified to do so
- b) Those who have not been reported to the Bouncer as being trouble by following other members around and looking weird
- c) Those who are looking for an alcoholic beverage
- d) Those with "snakehips"



## Western Isles/Sound of Mull Expedition 11<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> August 2006

Yep, that's right we are already planning for **2006** – if the write-ups above have whetted your appetite then get your name down for this asap!

Rick Whitby is organising a week's liveaboard diving the fantastic wrecks and reefs of the Western Isles of Scotland and the Sound of Mull, where visibility is usually in the 10-20m range.

We'll be staying on "Gemini Storm", a Severn Class lifeboat, newly converted for diving and touring round the best dive sites towns and pubs the area has to offer. She will sleep 10 in 5 twin cabins, and looks like this:



Cost is between £580-600 all inclusive with 3 meals a day and air; Nitrox is extra. Only other costs are getting to Oban (which we may organise a mini-bus for) and beer (for which you'll need to budget about £1000). The boat will depart and return to Oban and the week will be spent touring the archipelago off Western Scotland, touring round Mull, the Small Isles, Isle of Skye and the Outer Hebrides, overnighing in various seaside towns and fishing villages such as Tobermory to provide some shore interest.

Since space is limited Rick needs an initial confirmation of interest and will require a deposit of £100 to secure a place (this is what the Skipper requires) - realistically he'll need to hear back from interested people ASAP so he can confirm the boat with the skipper

**This is a completely new venue for the club, and as such should provide a cracking weeks diving. Go on, HAVE IT!!!!!!!!!**

## Here Be Dragons!!!!

***The following is a report from Chris Boddington, our man in Asia on diving in Konodo, Indonesia. It sounds like a truly fantastic trip – 200 7 exped anyone????????????***



Looking down I see a large bolder covered in coral, dots of tiny fish swirl around it. This is my immediate target, 25 metres below me, easy - although the sea had other ideas. The current was ripping along, the descent is supposed to be the easiest part of the dive. Here I'm fining as hard as I can just to stay above the boulder as I drop.

I risk a look ahead of the boulder and see Harry the Dive Guide creeping forward, his little legs fining like his life depends upon it. As I near the coral boulder, I notice the myriads of Anithias covering it, the odd parrot fish and Sweetlips sheltering from the current.

I too, catch breathe behind it. My goal is 30 metres away, into the current. I take a quick glance around, above me, to the left and right huge schools of Sweetlips, snapper, parrot ship and Trevally hang in the current making it look so easy. In areas, their dense schools seem to block out the bright morning sunlight.

I decide to push on and duck out into the current, trying to keep low and find whatever shelter I can. If you have dived a drift on the Waldrens, or have tried to go into the oncoming rip on the wrong side of Eddystone, then you'll know that swimming into this kind of current isn't natural or supposed to be possible. But ducking behind every bit of cover it can be done, especially if you go in light, i.e. without loads of kit hanging off you... there is no need for torches, pre assembled smbs, crab hooks and what not...

Finally I reached my goal, the lip of the pinnacle. I was shattered, head down I clung to a rock, breathing heavy I could almost feel my tank contort with every breath.

Slowly I looked up, my mouth hung open, my reg almost dropping out. Sharks, white-tip and large grey reef danced effortlessly in the current before me, huge schools of Trevallies, Sweetlips, Snapper, Fusiliers and damsel fish hang in the swirling currents. After a few moments of awe, I raise my camera for a few tentative shots, but notice that I don't seem to keep anything in frame, the camera is shaking against the current, and if I grip it with two hands I would need to let go of the rock...not the best option. Several large aqua green parrot wrasse cruise by, then a very large napoleon comes past. The sharks don't come closer than 5 metres (15 ft) from me, the larger grey reef are up to 7ft long.



After what seem like a few moments I notice Harry motioning to leave, I check my gauges and see that in little over 15 minutes I've drunk half my tank. I gentle rise and am swept away from the action, the current carries me swiftly up the slop to 20 metres. It seems that there is a pecking order here, the apex predators and large fish live right on the edge of the plateau and the further back you go the smaller the fish get. I try to maintain my depth and swim westward across the plateau, the current seems to have relented some...must be approaching slack if they ever have slack here. A huge shoal of Trevally circles me, their large silver sides glinting in the sunlight. They lose interest and swim into the lip whilst I make my way up to 12 metres on the pinnacle and duck behind the lee side of the formation. Here more fusiliers, anthia, damsel fish and other reef creatures' shelter. The coral is more vibrantly coloured here and a healthy mix of soft and hard corals. Shrimp and small crabs live amongst the corals with eels and what Komodo's underwater world is famous for: Nudibranchs. Komodo is truly a nudibranch spotters heaven, every dive you will spot more nudibranches that you can count, their colour and diversity amaze.



I spent over 30 minutes scanning this side of the pinnacle at less than 10 metres, amazed at the nudibranches, shrimp, and eels. The Damsel fish and Anthias, with the

Grouper and Lionfish constantly trying to eat them. After an hour I return to the surface and climbed aboard the boat with 50 bar in my tank and a huge smile on my face.

Komodo National Park, Indonesia, home to the Dragon, and some great diving. The Dragons are large Monitor Lizards, up to 10 feet long that look sluggish, but those looks are deceiving, for the Dragons can move when they want to. However, they are an ambush predator, who waits for their prey to come to them. They have huge ripping talons, but their bite is their best weapon. Their mouth contains large serrated curling teeth. Between each tooth there are usually chunks of meat from its previous meals. This rotting flesh helps to culture a unique bacterial growth, which means almost certain death to anything bitten by a Dragon, a death that usually occurs within a week. It's no wonder, unlike other areas in the region that there are no Salt Water Crocodiles here.



However, Komodo has more dangerous things than Dragons, here the water bubbles and boils where currents incept and struggle for control. The Indian and Pacific Ocean currents can merge here, fighting for dominance, which results in some spectacular diving but not for the faint hearted!

When I went in July the northern side of Komodo Island boasted stunning clear blue 28-30°C water, however, on the southern half of the island, the water was a cloudy green 25-27°C. An incredible difference, especially when you take into account that the Island is less than 22 miles long.

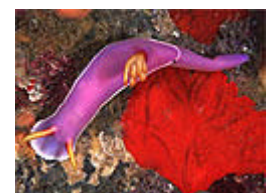
Sitting onboard MV Temukira, a liveaboard from Grand Komodo, the only Indonesia owned diving company running trips to Komodo, you can see the flow of the currents around the Komodo national park, the water ripples and boils in huge flows, it's amazing and daunting to think that this is where we dive, and for fun! I've seen strong current flows in the UK flowing in and out of harbours and around rocky outcrops, but I've never seen them before in what is described as open water, and it's not just in one area it's all over the place.



We headed south, to Manta Alley into the green water. As usual with places named after animals, those animals were lacking, i.e. no Mantas, which shocked Henry our guide, especially when we completed another dive later in the week and still didn't see any. However, in the green water, with 15-20 metres viz, there were huge schools of fish - Giant Trevally, Bumphead Parrot fish, Napoleon Wrasse, Blue Fusiliers, Yellow Tails, Brown Surgeon Fish, Unicorn fish, Blue triggers, various types of Snapper and the ever present Damsel, Anthias and Sergeant Major fish. A small school of barracuda graced us with their presence as well.

The terrain underwater was rugged to say the least, large canyons with huge boulders, predominately hard coral, there was very little soft coral growth, but then with the currents and water temperature it is not to be expected.

Here I experienced a serious down current as well as what can only be described as surge at 20 metres and the usually left right currents. The Alley itself is a channel between a large rocky outcrop and the southern tip of Komodo. The water again bubbles and boils and the base of the manta alley is swept clean of all forms of life it appears, but the walls, boulders and gentle slopes contain a rich biodiversity. Here like elsewhere in Komodo, it is a macro photographer's dream (or nightmare depending on the currents) as the macro life here almost inconceivable. Invertebrate life is rich and as diverse as anywhere in the world, shrimp, crabs and lobsters of all sizes and shapes abound. The nudibranch and flatworms are even more diverse and prolific. I have never seen so many, or different types in one dive before.



The trip to Komodo is not really a holiday but more like a true adventure, as

with the flight into Bima begins the decent into the wild. Komodo at times feels like one of the last truly wild places on earth, more Jurassic Park than National Park. The diving is not for the faint hearted, but for the adventurous it is definitely worth it - no wrecks true but oh, what you miss in metal it more than makes up for life, colour and sheer adrenaline diving.

I would urge you to go with Grand Komodo, as they could not be more helpful and honest with guests and true to meet your expectations. When I travelled there were just 3 of us on the trip for a week, the MV Temukira sleeps 12 guests. Harry is a great guide, the food was superb, probably the best I've eaten on a dive trip and the planning and diving really does rate up there with the best, as good as PNG and Mozambique for me, for tropical diving.



Oh and the Manta's turned up on the last dive of the week to round off a superb weeks diving.

**Chris Boddington**

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## **NEW Website Update NEW**

You may not have noticed, but our website:

**[www.croydonbsac.com](http://www.croydonbsac.com)**

has been updated. Please have a look and if you have any suggestions for content please let me know.

Paul Brown

## The Terrible Twosome do Nitrox

One day Jamie and I had a brilliant idea; we would do our BSAC Nitrox course. "OH NO" everyone said (well the boys did anyway – they haven't been able to get past girls on dive boats). So off we went and booked ourselves onto the Combined Nitrox course (Basic & Advanced) held over a weekend period run by the South East Region ([www.bsac-se.org.uk](http://www.bsac-se.org.uk)).

The Saturday was spent in the classroom reviewing theory learnt in basic diver training, progressing onto the calculations and dynamics of Nitrox. Between the 142 PowerPoint slides for the theory, we had the opportunity to do some practical work such as using analysers, planning dives and using Nitrox tables.

There were plenty of tea breaks to be had and at lunchtime being the sophisticated sociable pair we are, we set up our picnic blanket in the sun with our fresh crisp salads and Cornish pasties while the rest of the group sat on railway sleepers in a shady corner eating petrol station sandwiches.

There were 2 Instructors and 2 Assistant Instructors on hand to answer questions and re-alliterate any subject people were unsure about. At the end of the day there was a 30 question multiple choice exam paper on the day's learning which we got the results back from before we dispersed for the day.

After the traditional Croydon BSAC curry we got an early night so we could get up at an unearthly hour for a Sunday to travel down to Vobster Quay in Somerset ([www.vobsterquay.co.uk](http://www.vobsterquay.co.uk)) to complete two dives and several drills.

Unsurprisingly Jamie and I got split up into different dive groups (think this was partly due to our disruptive behaviour the day before, the giggling we did and managing to raise a few eyebrows with my twin set – probably didn't do myself any favours as when asked to describe my dive kit to the group I referred to my set as yellow and cute!!). After the Instructors talked us through their kit, they were happy to help students configure their kit to incorporate a pony and additional reg and the best way to access these when required.

In the water and drill one began almost immediately, it was not to go beyond the Maximum Operating Depth (MOD), which the Instructors try to trick you into doing, in their briefing they said, "Follow me and stick together". To ensure that none of us really did go beyond the MOD, which in this instance was 33.75m for 32% mix there was a mock MOD of 19m.

The second drill was to deploy a DSMB from the bottom, attaching either your reel and SMB or yourself to a platform bar; shortly after this the third drill was to ascend to carry out some simulated stops, 5mins at 9m and 5mins at 6m. The fourth drill was to swap regs at 9m and 6m onto your pony/stage/second bottle.

After lunch and what felt like a 'boil in the bag' moment in the heat and dive gear on we went back in for a second dive. This dive was more of an assessment compared to the first dive that allowed you to try out any new configuration of kit. Again, one of the drills was not to go beyond the MOD, we went for a bit of a bubble and looked round the crushing works. We ascended to 12m where we had to deploy a DSMB from mid water, take note: mid water means just that, do not try to hide the fact that your fin is touching a ledge and think no one else can see as the silt has been stirred up, like one member of the group did. Nor should you laugh loudly through your reg at your Instructor when he could not get his SMB out and up followed by calling him a w\*\*ker and then top it off with being a smart arse and putting your DSMB up perfectly and so fast that he misses it!! (Good work J would have loved to see his face when you sent your blob up).

Again we had to do simulated stops and reg changes, what I found to be particularly good is to move away from your group and sit in the sun to do your stops leaving them behind in the dark trying not to get lines tangled.

On the surface and after debriefing, Jamie and I took great pleasure in calling PB to tell him from now on he would have to refer to us as the **Brilliant Tekkie Nitrox Dive Girls** and that we were going to book onto the Trimix course the following weekend, to which he replied "You can f\*\*k right off", translation that meant "Good work girls, well done for getting your Nitrox ticket, I'm sure you will do just fine in your Trimix course".

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## Divers of the Last 6 Months!!!

Over the last couple of editions of the mighty Muddy Puddle you may have noticed a lack of "Diver of the Month" articles. This is because I simply couldn't be arsed to do it. So to make up for it, here are the nominations for the Diver-of-the-Last-6-Months...

We start with the traditional Easter jolly to Plymouth. Now this trip is designed to allow new divers to make their first open water dives and for the more experienced divers to get back in the saddle. So step up Mr **Tony Ray** who it seems had certainly been out of the saddle for a while! Whilst diving with one of our trainees on their first open water dive our Tone managed to lose his buddy some time between falling off of Venture's gunwale and hitting the water! Surely a new record in buddy-losing?

Messer's **Brown** and **Carvall** need a refresher course on one of the basics of diving – DON'T DRINK AND DIVE. Said idiots, on arriving in Plymouth early, decided "a couple of drinks and something to eat" was in order...fast forward to 11.15pm and we find our Chairman and Diving Officer paralytic in the Queens Head setting a very bad example to the new divers. Special mention is also made here of **Paul Carvall's** unique use for the B&B's waste paper bin – at what point did it look to you like a urinal? Fast forward to our return trip to Plymouth in May and once again we find that our hero's haven't learnt their lesson and both were looking decidedly green on the way out to the first dive. Will they ever learn?

An eventful day out on Wight Diver resulted in **Scott Dillon** needing a new mask. Having boasted all morning about the dirt-cheap deal he had got on the mask, Scott thought that the best thing to do would be to place it on the bench just next to the bottom of his rather heavy twinset. Once kitted up, our man with 20-odd years of experience stood up to rearrange himself before sitting back down only to hear a rather loud crunch behind him – cue glass all over the place and Scott holding a mask with no glass! On the same day **Wight Diver** herself provided a few "oh-no" moment and earned herself a nomination for Diver-of-the-Last-6-Months when her lift stopped working mid-recovery! Between dives the temperamental machine decided to raise and lower itself at will and it was touch and go whether it would work at all after the second dive. Luckily it did, but honestly – lifts with a mind of their own? Whatever next?

It seems **Ben Stock** has a new hobby – its called *Paying for Dives but Not Going*. The rules are simple: Book yourself on boats or trips and then don't bother to go along! This means that 1) You miss doing the best sport in the world; 2) You leave you proposed buddy flying solo; and 3) you end up out of pocket! If you are very good at this new game you can actually miss a whole week of diving and end up down to the tune of £350!!!! Surely a candidate should it ever become an Olympic Sport?

Speaking of **PC Stock**, he earns himself a second nomination for Diver-of-the-Last-6-Months for letting a car run over his regs, thus crushing the second stages and rendering them useless. But wait – he has tied this in well, as when this happened he was in a Brighton dive shop getting ready for a day out on Nauticat! Perhaps this was simply a rouse so he could feed his addiction for *Paying for Dives but Not Going*? There goes another £40...kerching!!!!

Some of you may have noticed that **Paul Brown** enjoys looking for the odd artefact on a wreck, so why is it then Mr Brown that when you got the opportunity to lift perhaps the best bit of spidge you'll ever find – namely the telegraph from the *Clan McKinlay* - you failed so miserably in your attempt??? You should be ashamed to carry that lump-hammer.

Moving on to the Weymouth weekend and nominations here (unsurprisingly) go to **Brown and Carvall**. Along with **Clare Walton** they managed to get collared by the landlady of the Bed & Breakfast in their room after a curry and session at the Red Lion watching an "art" flick called *Bridget the Midget*. Ms Walton is reminded that the bringing of such films on dive trips is not encouraged....

Also in the running from our little Dorset expedition are **Chris Griffiths** (for preventing Pauls B & C and Rick Whitby from sleeping by snoring all night and then having the bare faced cheek to moan that he was tired the next day); **Rick Whitby** (for buying a drysuit that would fit a bloke a good foot taller than him); **Vicky Cleaver** (for breaking down on the M3 going home); and lastly for such gross stupidity, **Clare Walton** (for falling for the "I bet you 50p I can make your chest move without touching it" gag).

Sark threw up a wealth on diving stupidity, much of which would embarrass a first-timer let alone some of the ruffy-tuffy types that were stumbling about the good ship *Protector*. First of all to **Rick Whitby**: Our hero thinks that the best way to be found on surfacing is to ascend against a black rockface in a black suit and black BCD whilst not putting up a delayed SMB. He certainly wasn't had twice though as a couple of days later he was brandishing his newly bought flag with all his might to passing yachts when he couldn't see the boat. And to our other new member, **Ian Mulcahy**, who has earned himself the nickname Boon as he has developed an Elphick-like knack to dismantling his kit 10mins before diving and kitting up at a snails pace...he still wasn't as slow as **Chris Boddington** though. As you may have already read, the goup was split between two sets of digs for the week. Nothing unusual in that you might think, that is until you hear that **Clare Walton** has taken to giving Chris Griffiths his morning wake up call topless! Clearly she could not resist his snoring-charms...Speaking of **Chris Griffiths**, rumour has it that he has taken to wearing a leopard-print thong whilst away!!! This is fine in the privacy of your own home, but honestly Mr Griffiths – at breakfast in the B&B?

A special mention goes to the **regional instructor** (who shall remain nameless) who, on Clare Walton and Jaime Dawson's nitrox course, suggested that clipping the DSMB to yourself before sending it up would be a good idea. Surely this doughnut should be busted back down to mask clearing for giving such dangerous advice???

But lastly to the winner of this award, for what can only be described as a medal-winning act of diving-related-idiocy. Step up **Tony Ray**, that ruffy-tuffy-diving-bricklayer earns himself the title for managing to come last in a fight with a crab. Old *Manta Ray*, a veteran of the art of crustacean catching, was on a dive out of Brighton with our esteemed Diving Officer when he decided that a spot of crab for dinner might be in order. On spotting a suitably sized specimen, the diver-of-30-odd-years-of-experience went for the kill. Now if you have ever spoken to Tony about the crab catching artform, you will know that he claims it to be easy "just be quick, don't be scared and get them on their back" he'll tell you...So why is it then Manta, that when you were fumbling about for your goody bag to put the crab in you managed to let it get such a tight hold on your thumb that you had to bash it on the wreck and, finally, rip its claw off to remove it? Apparently there was more claret in our hero's glove than water! At the time of writing the cut through the thumbnail and flesh still hadn't healed and it's currently blacker than the City of Waterford in February...

**Well Done Tony, Thoroughly deserved!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

## Fancy a Dive Out of Brighton?

A new boat, Brighton Diver, run by Paul Dyer is operating out of Brighton. Paul takes bookings for individuals at weekends and will go wherever you like, so if you want a dive give him a bell on **07901 822 375** or have a look at [www.brightondiver.com](http://www.brightondiver.com).

Paul Brown



A Great Big  
THANKYOU

to

**BEN STOCK**

for all his hard work as Expeditions Officer  
this year.

Without your efforts we'd probably have  
never left Croydon.

You're a credit to The Force.....



## Thinking of Twinning?

A fair few people in the club are looking to get twinsets, so I thought I'd write a short piece on what to consider if you are going to purchase. I'm no expert, but have been using various twinsets in different configurations for about 5-6 years, so hopefully this will be of some help.

### Why Bother?

This is the question you really have to ask before looking to spend the money on a twinset. Are you just doing it to look a bit techie or are there reasons for needing the extra gas? Redundancy is a very important factor in diving today and should be considered whenever you are purchasing equipment. Often a pony will provide enough redundancy for a typical no decompression dive and will save you a lot of money, it will also save you an awful lot of backache! However, if you are getting into the realms of decompression and/or deeper diving, you will be looking to twin up.



To take an example of a typical club dive on the *City of Waterford*. Depth is 36m and assuming a breathing rate of 20l/minute you get the following:

| Cylinder Size | Gas available<br>(minus reserve) | Time Available |
|---------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| 15l           | 2730l                            | 29 mins        |
| 3l Pony       | 546l                             | *14 mins       |
| 12l Twinset   | 4368l                            | 47 mins        |

\*2 minutes to ascend from 36m to 6m at 15m per minute + 11 minutes available to breathe at 6m + 1 minute to ascend from 6m to surface

Clearly the twinset allows a much longer bottom time, but you have to remember that the no-stop time on air for this dive would be 14 minutes (BSAC 88 Tables), so you are looking at either decompressing for a substantial time or getting a nitrox mix. The pony is adequate bailout for a dive with about 10 minutes of stops, this does, however, assume an exact 15m per minute (i.e. 2 minute) ascent to the 6m stop.

So we can see here that a twinset coupled with a nitrox is a reasonable route to take for average club diving. Equally though, a pony and 15l are perfectly adequate if you do not plan to go much deeper than this.

### What's it made of?



The twinset itself comprises of: 2 x cylinders; a set of bands to attach the cylinders together and to the BCD; and usually a manifold (optional).

I have left off the wing/backplate as these aren't really part of the twinset and you do not need one to go over to twins. Obviously you will need a second regulator, this is disused under **Regs and Bits**.

Some may question whether the manifold really is optional, but I will deal with this later. I believe that although they are by far the safest way to go they are not the only way to configure the set.

## Cylinders

By far the most popular set up is a set of 12l, 232 bar cylinders. This is a good set for several reasons:

- 1) Not prohibitively heavy.
- 2) A good size to allow adjustment of the position of the bands so that you can get a good trim and be able to reach the isolator properly (if you have one).
- 3) Easily provides enough gas for 2 dives in the club diving range and for deeper dives down to 70m+.



10l cylinders are also fairly popular for twinning up, but in my opinion are not ideal. The problems are as follows:

- 1) The cylinder itself is too short and as such means it is difficult to space the bands appropriately to adjust for trim and to be able to reach the valves.
- 2) This shortness results in them often having to be used without boots, which damages the cylinders and means they can slide off boat benches.
- 3) As the bottom band is placed so low they are awkward to kit up into, you have to wriggle up into the harness rather than sitting back into it as you would with a set of 12's.
- 4) In the 232 bar form (unless you have the breathing rate of an ant) they do not provide enough gas for 2 decent dives. This point is often gotten round by using 300 bar cylinders, but these introduce their own problems:
  - i. It is rare that you can get a 300 bar fill – mostly you'll end up with 270-280 bar.
  - ii. Even if you do get a 300 bar fill then you don't actually get the incremental increase in gas you would expect, as at this pressure the gas doesn't behave according to the Ideal Gas Laws.
  - iii. It is more difficult to blend nitrox/trimix to 300 bar, again due to the way the gases behave at such high pressures.
  - iv. They are even heavier than a set of 12's!

Of course there are larger sets available, 15l, 18l and even 20l sets are produced, but these are far outside the scope of club diving. If you need a 20l twinset you should really be looking at a rebreather instead...

## Bands



There are two types of bands available – steel or webbing. The point of using a set of bands is to keep the set rigid against the backplate and to stop the manifold bending (if one is used). Steel are usually the best bet as they don't corrode and are far more rigid than the webbing sets – these are useful though, especially for taking abroad or if you only intend to twin up every now and again (when I first started using a set of twins for occasional deeper dives this is exactly what I used to do).

## Manifolds

The manifold connects the two cylinders so that you can breath from both without having to swap regulators. When you are looking at manifolds you have three choices: not to use one (known as **independents**); the **bar manifold**; and the **isolator manifold**.

As mentioned previously, you do not have to use a manifold. Using two independent cylinders and breathing each down by (for example) 50 bar at a time is a perfectly acceptable way to configure the twinset. The issue here is that you have to keep a much closer eye on your air and you have to be comfortable swapping your regulators at regular intervals at depth. Also, should you have a free flow on one cylinder you do not have the ability to shut off that regulator and make the gas available again, as you do with an isolator.

The bar manifold is simply a tube between the two cylinders which effectively makes them into a single gas source that will not, in the event of a regulator free flow, allow you to save any of your gas. This means that the bar-manifolded twinset presents all of the same problems as using a single cylinder and is, therefore, probably the worst option of the three.

The isolator manifold is a tube between the cylinders that has a tap in the middle, allowing the set to be used as a single circuit or isolated into two separate gas sources. The ability to do this is especially useful in the event of a regulator freeflow. Should this occur, the diver reaches behind his/her head and closes the isolator tap between the cylinders, thus saving half of their gas straight away. After this, the valve with the freeflowing regulator can be switched off to stop the freeflow and the centre tap then opened allowing access to the remaining gas in that cylinder. This gas saving ability is the reason many people opt for the isolator manifold.



## Regs and Bits

It may be obvious, but you will need two regulators for the set. Usually these are set up so that the primary second stage (the one you will breathe) and suit inflation run off of the first stage on your right cylinder post and the back-up second stage, wing inflate and SPG will run off of the left post. Using non-handed regulators (such as Poseidons or Oceanic Omegas) is often a good idea here as it means that one regulator can be routed over each shoulder, however, this is not essential and it is easy to arrange conventional shaped regulators so they sit nicely whilst having the hoses routed over the same shoulder. Some people use two pressure gauges but to me this is an unnecessary increase in o-rings to pop. If you are in a situation whereby you have had to shut off the left post (that has the SPG on) then you will be starting your ascent and there will really be no need to look at the pressure gauge.

So that's it, a bluffers guide to twinsets. Personally I think they are essential if you are looking to dive below about 40m-45m as they allow a much greater bottom time. Shallower than this they are still useful, but the expense, the increased weight and the fact they are more hassle to move about on land means that they can often be more of a hindrance than a help. If you are looking at buying a set speak to the members who already have them – me, Tony Ray, Chris G etc.

***If anyone fancies trying out a twinset I am more than happy to bring either my 12's or my 15's down to the pool on a Wednesday.***

Paul Brown

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## Exploding Bottles.

The following was taken from the shipping magazine *Seaways* and shows what a cylinder can do if it wants to...

"During an inspection of one of our company's vessels the surveyor showed me the pictures which were taken after an incident took place on another company's vessel (he didn't disclose the name of the company or the ship). As you can see these show the consequences of a gas bottle exploding in a lifeboat during the process of charging it up from the breathing apparatus air compressor. The master of the boat was in close proximity of the lifeboat and he was very seriously wounded."



So just make sure you stand back next time **Amphibian Sports** decide to give you a "good" fill...

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### CROYDON BSAC 23 2005/2006 Committee Nomination Form

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_ :

**SECONDED** \_\_\_\_\_ :

**COMMITTEE POSITION** : \_\_\_\_\_

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