

Spring 2010

red sea safari

Tish Bhatnager

After six years of diving, we were determined that this year our November holiday would be non-diving. But where to go... Canada, Prague, Vegas, Mexico?

With no firm decision made, I arrive home from work to discover that Raj has found a good deal on an Egypt liveaboard but we have to book straight away as there are only two places left. It was booked that evening even though I vaguely remember swearing never to go near a liveaboard again after the last experience.

check out and away we go

So, we have booked on a seven day 'wrecks and reefs' tour out of Sharm. We join the boat and the ten other guests on Tony Blackhurst's smallest vessel, 'The Tempest'. The first day is shallow checkouts...some nice fan corals and the usual fishy suspects in this area including blue spotted rays, puffer fish and moray eels.

Day two finds us at 'The Thistlegorm' for two dives. First we drop down the side and along the gangways, past an upturned tank, then down to the prop where we see a huge turtle. Then down into one of the holds to see a

number of Bedford trucks. On the second dive we penetrate the wreck and find through holds two and three where there are a number of trucks, jeeps, motorcycles and some aircraft wings. We also see the turtle again.

older beauties

On the next couple of days we dive a few more wrecks which all came to grief on the same reef. These are all much older wrecks than 'The Thistlegorm', very picturesque and teeming with fish.

The 'Giannis D' is one we have both dived and enjoyed before. Then the 'Carnatic', one that Raj had dived before and one of his favourites. It is a really pretty wreck with the light shining through the timbers and a large shoal of bat fish inside. We make our way to the stern section passing two masts laid out along the sea floor and round to the prop before making our way back.

The third wreck, in some ways similar to the 'Carnatic' was the 'Ulysses'. We swam through the wreck and also through a funnel section that was separated from the main wreck, finishing with a drift along the reef.

upside-down wreck

The next day we dived the 'Dunraven'. Dropping down on to the upturned hull, we made our way down to the prop and swam through the wreck to the mid section before exiting and completing the dive along the reef.

In the afternoon we dive a wonderful wreck called 'The Barge'. Although only at 16m, this was a truly memorable dive. Just two of us on the wreck and so much marine life it was difficult to tear ourselves away. We drifted around among those fish for over an hour and then spent an hour back on the boat going through the fish identification books trying to put names to some of the fish we had seen.

We completed our week with a sequence of drifts along Jackson, Woodhouse and Thomas Reefs.

wreck convert

I think this is the first holiday that I've been just as interested in the wrecks as I have the fish. I still can't identify one bit of metal from another, but we had a truly great week and I can say that I expect I can be persuaded to go on another liveaboard at some time in the future!



Watching me, watching you



Jackson Reef



Crocodile fish

survival call

By the time you read this, you will probably be thinking about the coming years diving. The hardy may have already got a couple in here and there, but the season is looming, lets hope it is a safe one. Diving is organised for virtually every weekend in the summer, there is a big trip planned to Chuuk Lagoon, a summer holiday family camping trip and the club diary is busy with a number of courses underway and divers keen to progress.

So why are the committee slightly unsettled? Well, the membership is down. The club has a nominal break even point and the membership number is getting closer to that figure than it has been in a long time.

We have to try to ensure that the club retains its current membership and attracts new blood, so the committee will be trying to make that happen. But they cannot do this on their own, so please help to contribute in some way. The club is in some ways uniquely placed to offer a range of diving that most other clubs don't or can't so lets play on those strengths.

Whether it is putting up a flyer in the office, helping at the Wokingham May Carnival or telling the committee about possibilities to recruit new members, let us know. If we are doing something that makes it less likely you will renew, you have to tell us and tell us what we can do about it. If you know others who are qualified divers but don't dive with us, get them to come down one night and see what they are missing out on.

Go spread the word!

AED

Automated External Defibrillator Workshop

Ruth Beattie

We see hospital casualty rooms on television – patient in cardiac arrest, people rushing round, large power pack wheeled in, paddles at the ready – clear!

There is Automated External Defibrillator (AED) equipment available for emergency first aid use in ambulances and offices and now there is one for use in diving emergencies.

I was curious how applying electricity across someone's chest in a wet environment was approached. AEDs are described as easy to use, the machine tells you what to do and when to do it. This course, designed to teach their use, was much more helpful than I ever anticipated.

getting started

Eleven trainees gathered in the meeting room and Jeff Reed, aided by Nick Jewson, gave the background

and theory of AED use.

We started with heart physiology and the causes and symptoms of cardiac arrest. There were some chilling statistics to emphasise the speed required for emergency response in the event of cardiac arrest.

Next, we were introduced to the AED equipment and its safe use in the diving environment as part of basic life support procedures. This included the need to expose the chest, requiring scissors to cut away the dive suit and undergarments and maybe a razor for the more hirsute male casualty, to aid sticking of the pads.

costs

The legal implications of use were also discussed, with the assurance that it was unlikely anyone would be at risk of litigation for doing their best to save a life – at least in the UK. It is not quite as clear for some foreign locations.



In the classroom



Cutting the suit



We also discussed the equipment costs which start at around £2,000 for the initial outlay (although discounts are available). Annual maintenance is also required.

hands on

Next we moved on to the practical. Having demonstrated we had not forgotten our basic life support skills on resuscitation dummies, we then incorporated the AED.

Our non-responsive, non-breathing casualty with blue lips was assessed as being a suitable candidate for the procedure. We opened up the AED training kits, which were surprisingly small and light and followed the instructions.

The 'real thing' is capable of packing an enormous punch, delivering a brief high voltage electric shock – around 2000 volts. Fortunately the practice ones are very much milder than that.

They are automated in that once switched on a voice prompt tells you what to do, i.e. plug in the lead for the pads, peel the pads off their backing with the diagrams indicating where to put them on the chest.

that's shocking!

The resuscitation dummies had been pre-fitted with pads under the 'skin' of the dummies to allow alignment with the AED pads. Since we were using training machines, there were several pre-set routines that could be accessed. Once correctly attached, the machines determine the heart activity and instruct whether to shock or not.

The operator has to push the button if a shock is required, allowing the rescuers to move clear of the casualty. The AED also gives instructions on the delivery of the 30 chest compressions and 2 effective rescue breaths required.

The speed of chest compressions was indicated by clicking, and the breathing duration and timing indicated by two very deep drawn out 'breeeeeeeeathe'. Many of us were not going at the optimal speed for either.

overall assessment

I am very glad I attended. There has been some discussion within the club as to whether we should own such equipment. The cost is high, and it would be impossible to have just a single unit – with an active club taking out more than one boat on many weekends – how do you decide which boat would take the AED?

This qualification, once gained, does allow you to use other AED devices outside the diving world, and maybe now it might not be so daunting should it ever be necessary. Thanks to Jeff and Nick for running the course.



Placing the pads



Giving the shock



Practice in the field



Nick announces raffle winners



'Cheeeeee'!

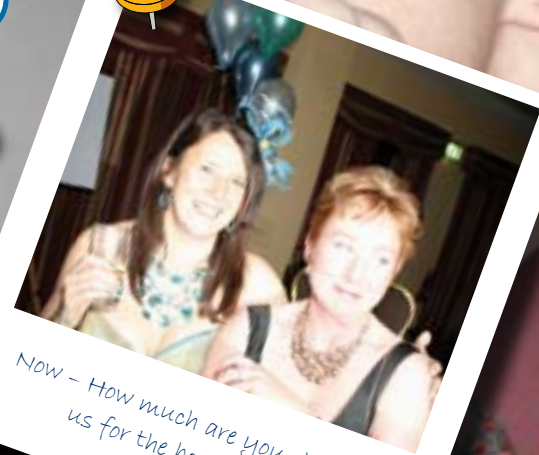


Raj & Tish discuss "dissolved bubble models"

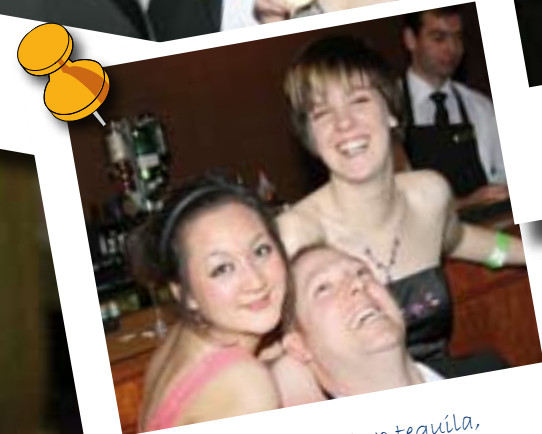
ice divers ball



Pizza Pizza!



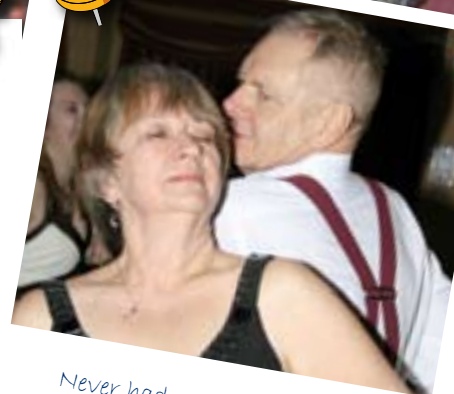
Now - How much are you charging us for the boat per day?



One tequila, two tequila, three tequila - floor!



"Rowing the boat home"...
New Skills Development Course!



Never had anyone fall asleep on me during a slow dance before!

days of whine and red noses

Mike Lindsay

The wind was blowing hard, the rain horizontal, as I looked out of the window just after the January snows had left those rather attractive lumps of black/grey heaps of thawing ice around the countryside.

I mused to myself 'Spring' and one's thoughts turn love...or in my case, a plunge into the icy cold water at Wraysbury. Enough to cool anybody's ardour!

So...to the email to enlist a group of like-minded divers. How many would respond to my call for volunteers? Five, eight, ten? I had a very positive response of one. I consoled myself that quality rather than quantity was the most important factor. So just Roger and me then! Two senior divers left to brave the elements on an overcast bitterly cold Thursday.

first things first

We arrived at about 10.00am and I introduced my rather bewildered friend to Roger. He would be acting as shore cover and had been given strict instructions that if we did not surface in half an hour he was to inform Wraysbury management who could then institute search procedures

and upload details of our cars for sale on ebay.

point of no return

It got to about 11.00am. We had put off the inevitable long enough. So it was a case of reminding ourselves of where the oxygen bottle goes, why do we have a couple of breathy things and why we tie on some sort of carnival balloon for celebrating the end of the dive?

wet and weary

Our dive lasted a five full minutes at four metres, meaning my car was safe from the clutches of ebay. So was this a dive? By my interpretation yes, if you go down and take two breaths underwater without the aid of a snorkel, that's a dive!

The serious reason I needed to dive in cold, unwelcoming waters was to check that I remembered my drills and my buddy check procedure. I also needed to ensure, that like their user, my recently serviced regs were fully functioning in the three degrees of very cold water.

The other reasons...well a bacon sandwich, hot cup of tea and a chance to talk about diving. Is there a better way to spend a Thursday morning?



Top: Roger and Mike take the plunge
Above: Mike prepared to boldly go where no other sane diver is prepared to go!

commercial diving UK style

John Ralston

Back in January, Gary from Slough Scuba kindly came to the club to give us an idea of what commercial diving in the UK can be like.

Gary started by giving us some background on how to become a commercial diver and the challenges faced by those starting out in the Industry. Contrary to popular opinion, commercial diving is not glamorous, it can cost a lot of money to qualify, then the fight to get a job begins .

While most courses guarantee a job, it is unlikely to be very long and at £80 – £120 per day, it is not going to go very far in paying off the debt that a newly qualified commercial diver is likely to have accumulated!

checking out the gear

Gary brought along some commercial gear as well as a replica hard hat for us to check out. He went through the equipment they use, and described how it all fitted together. Apart from bailout, it bears very little resemblance to a modern Sport Diver's equipment, with surface supply for their gas and two-way communications being the order of the day.

a day in the life of...

Gary also walked us through the realities of a few jobs and the sort of equipment they wear and the hazards they face. Slightly disturbing was the description of working in the reservoirs maintaining pipes and systems that

take water from reservoirs for distribution. The huge size of some of the vents and equipment that they have to maintain is difficult to comprehend.

The 'yuk factor' was provided by a discourse on working in a 'Dirty Harry' suit in the settlement tank of a sewage plant. You don't really want to be a person who bites your nails in that sort of job!

a passion for water

Gary's enthusiasm for the job came over when he was describing some of the engineering that the Victorians used. In some cases, they built structures to rival churches and banks of the day, or, as he

described them, 'monuments to water'.

Some places the diver goes have very few visitors, but the Victorians still took care in building their infrastructure with ceramic faced tiles and decoration that today would be considered wasteful. Modern underwater commercial environments are apparently bland by comparison, although there is still a surprising amount of Victorian engineering in daily use.

summing up

Gary finished the talk with a short run down on saturation or 'sat' diving and the challenges those divers face. Finally, he took questions from an



Kit fettling commercial style



Rach tries on the hard hat

enthusiastic audience and the evening was much appreciated. Some people just couldn't resist trying on that replica hard-hat!

A big thanks goes to Gary for giving up his time to talk to us, and to Rachel Burton for organising the evening. Gary's shop, Slough Scuba, is one of our few remaining local dive shops. They carry a range of equipment to suit most divers and are open Tuesday-Saturday 10.00am – 6.00pm. www.sloughscuba.co.uk



Full face mask with light and comms



Lecture room packed out!

snippets

Dive Officer's Conference 2009

Frances Jewson

This event, which took place on 5 December, is held annually on the first weekend in December. It takes place at the Institute of Education, London and all BSAC dive members are invited to attend.

The DOC is where you can find out about all the latest updates to the Diver Training Scheme and the release of new or updated Skill Development Courses. These are presented by the National Diving Committee Group Leaders.

There are various award ceremonies during the day which include Instructor Training, Safety and Branch Award and the Heinke Trophy. The best expeditions are given an opportunity to present their club's project with details of how they spent their grant money and how successful they were in achieving their goal.

This year there were two speakers: Dr Peter Wilmshurst reported on his research into links between PFO and Decompression Illness. This included the association of PFO's with migraines and strokes. Callam Roberts also spoke on 'an unnatural history of the sea', looking back through the ages of commercial fishing techniques and fish quotas.

There are various stands with details of courses that are available within the region and you can get advice from the coaching teams. The BSAC shop is there so that you can buy manuals and books. Also, it is a good day to meet up with friends from previous dive trips.

Preparation for the new season

Jeff Reed

The key message is to remind members to build up to the new season slowly. Practice skills in the pool and then shallow water before commencing dives below 20 metres in 2010.

I have uploaded a 'Safety First' presentation and associated notes to the document section of the Yahoo website. This is a presentation from the archives but the advice is equally valid today as it was when first published.

Please take the time to read this and do your prep before hitting the open water.

out and about

Sarah Custerson



Ice Divers Ball 2010

diary dates

APRIL

Tuesday 27 April

Pub Meal from 7.30pm

Peacock Farm, Bracknell

Contact Sue Payne to put your name on the list.

sue@kiwisue.net | 07973 734391

JULY

Saturday 3 July

Club Weekend Meal

The Old Rooms, Weymouth

Contact Sue Payne to put your name on the list.

sue@kiwisue.net | 07973 734391

OCTOBER

Friday 8 October

Beer and skittles

Jack O' Newbury, Binfield

NOVEMBER

Saturday 6 November

Halloween & Fancy Dress party

Bracknell, TBC

JANUARY

Saturday 29 January

Ice Diver Ball

Coppid Beech Hotel, Bracknell

twenty one...again?

The traditional Indian Meal at Koh I Noor to celebrate Pete's birthday took place at the end of December. As always this was a very popular event, with 40+ people booked.

We have been there many times and take over the majority of the restaurant – but this year, the BSAC434 Risk Assessment didn't foresee a problem involving snow and grit...or lack of grit!

People were stranded everywhere including half a mile down the road. Luckily Pete and I were within walking distance, so we went to the restaurant with the expectation of a meal for two and a birthday cake big enough for 50.

However, we misjudged our hardy Bracknell 434 friends – nothing will stop some of them having their December Indian Meal. Many walked from their homes or their abandoned cars. One brave individual even took the train from Wokingham and walked from Bracknell train station.



In the end we had a great evening with eleven determined others. And to ensure that no one missed out Sue Payne organised another meal on 23 February 2010 – also a very popular evening with 33 people booked.

To everyone's relief there was no birthday cake in sight at the second meal. Phew, after all the left overs that were eaten or taken home the last time...Pete was still eating birthday cake on Christmas Day.

I hope Pete doesn't get used to the idea of having two birthdays. As usual we ate far too much, but it was great.

culture vultures

In December 2009, BSAC434 had its annual dose of culture when a group went to Sonning Mill to see 'Time and Time Again' – a comedy by Alan Ayckbourn.

It was by far the largest group the club had organised with 30 people attending. And for many it signalled the start of the festive season with Christmas dinner on the menu.

After such a large dinner and a few glasses of wine, everyone had strict instructions not to fall asleep during the performance, especially those

sitting in the first row. They had to concentrate on ensuring they didn't get caught up in the act!

Personally I always enjoy going to Sonning Mill each year – it is something different and I have already received emails asking when the next one will take place, so watch this space!

MANY THANKS to everyone who has contributed to this edition of *mouthpiece*. New content is always appreciated – please send to: publicity@bracknell-scuba.org.uk