



The Dive Club Newsletter

July 2008

Summer edition

**Club night at
The Black Boy,
Shinfield.**

**Wed 2nd July
@ 7:30pm**

**Be there and
support your dive
club**

**Need to go diving
then get your
name on the list
for one of our
planned outings**

News Update



I've just spent a lovely day witnessing another kind of diving. Just this side of Swindon is Redlands Airfield where in exchange for some wonga you can jump out of a plane with a parachute (and an instructor). Adrian's dad has always wanted to sky-dive so it seemed an appropriate thing for the family to club together and allow him this privilege for his 75th birthday. The whole preparation leading up to the final experience struck a chord compared to SCUBA diving. Not least the hope that as we woke up the great British summer had been kind enough to allow the event to take place. We watched as the crew, who must have packed a parachute hundred of times, carried this task out at almost demonstration pace. Every step was meticulously executed; each component checked and rechecked; silent concentration almost as though they are reciting a mantra; nothing rushed. A briefing to crew and paying guests so everyone knew what to expect, what they have to do and particular attention to safety. This is after all a highly dangerous sport. A final buddy check, all releases fastened, no dangly bits, got your hat gloves and mask, before the short walk to board the plane. We waited what seemed an eternity as the aircraft disappeared to the dizzy heights of 12000 feet. And at last out of the clouds comes Mac shrieking "Yeeehah!!" as his instructor guides the chute to a perfect landing on the field.



Preparation is paramount. No matter whether your next dive is your 1st or your 501st you should always take the same care.

Club Nights



On the first Wednesday of every month please join us in **The Black Boy**, Shinfield, It's recently had a makeover and the newly refurbished interior is complimented with a fresh new menu. Meet up with old friends and make some new ones over a drink or two and a spot of supper.

- 2nd July
- 6th August
- 3rd September
- 1st October
- 5th November
- 3rd December

Dive Diary 2008

Club Members will be automatically emailed details of planned dive events.

NOTE: £25 deposit required unless otherwise stated the balance due must be paid 1 month before the event. **Any dives booked must be paid for in full and refunds will not normally be given unless replacements are found to fill the booked places.** In the event of a cancellation it is the responsibility of the person who booked the diving to find a replacement, If they cannot then they are responsible for the full cost of the event

12th & 13th July - Lundy Island

We reach this magical island by boat from Ilfracombe. Experienced divers only. £40 per day for 2 dives. Such a success last year this time we have booked two boats. Obsession 1 **Full**, Obsession 2 **Full**

3rd August - Littlehampton

Wreck diving from hard boat "Our Joy". 25m plus suitable for Advanced divers. Two tanks required, £40 per day, two dives. **Full**

17th August - Selsey

RIB takes 7 divers. We booked for shuttle service to the Far Mulberry, the Nature Trail plus the opportunity to dive the lifeboat station from shore. All levels. £18 per RIB dive. **Full**

30th and 31st August - St Abbs and Eyemouth

Two Ribs available running a shuttle service so the loo is never to far away!!! (12 SPACES) ONLY £12 per dive!!! Shore diving available, all levels welcome. **3 Spaces**

1st and 2nd August - The Farnes

Two days diving around these fantastic island. £55 per person for 2 dives. B & B accommodation extremely good value. Speak to Rachel Cox for more info. **6 Spaces**

7th September - Isle of Wight

The "Oberon" (hard boat with lift) leaving from Port Solent. Several wrecks near the IoW including a Dakota aircraft which would be a bit different. Two tanks required £42 per day, two dives. **Full**

20th and 21st September - Weymouth

Wreck diving from the Tango. Max depth 40m, Two tanks required. £40 per day, two dives. **Full**

September or October - RAJA AMPAT Islands Indonesia, (West Papua)

Planning is well underway for those of you who fancy a trip further a field. This is the most fantastic part of the world and although it's going to take a day or so to get there the journey should be well worth it. Speak to Simon if you want to know all the details. <http://www.rajaampat.org/>

Now I realise this doesn't look very promising if your name is not down yet but we are hoping to have more stuff organised soon including one day diving.

However it doesn't all happen by magic and we would really appreciate if you could help. We are always looking for volunteers to arrange trips so if there's somewhere you'd like to dive why not make it happen.

Here we go on the Tango

14th & 15th June



Memories of a very wet weekend last May were rushing through my mind as I logged on to Metcheck before packing for the weekend. Type in the postcode DT4. Looking good, blueness with a few white fluffy things and a big yellow blob. Take out the jumpers and throw in the cut-offs!

Were off down to Weymouth for two days diving on the Tango, a 40' 750 hp vessel especially designed with divers in mind and has been fitted out by owner/skipper Phil Corben who has worked the waters around Weymouth and Portland all his working life, over 25 years. We check into the B&B on Friday night and have a simple supper at the Ship on the front. A good night's sleep and down for tasty breakfast where we find Simon & Katie already tucking in. A stroll to the local shop to get a few provisions for the day, and we come across a few more of our party (The Staggs and The Strattons) loading gear into their cars. As we turn round to the end of the street we are reminded it's veteran's weekend as a convoy of camouflaged tanks and armoured trucks thunder past. Extraordinary!



Down to the harbour where we meet up with the rest of the team (Hils, Ron Trigger & Pete H) to chain-gang the gear on board where tea is already brewed. Ropes off at 12:30 to catch the Alex van Opstal at slack water. This



5965 ton Belgian passenger liner, 420ft long and 57ft wide, was sunk in September 1939 by a mine en route from New York to Antwerp. Her oil burning engines could manage a top speed of 15 knots. Two weeks into the 2nd World War, the Alex Van Opstal became the first casualty. Her captain received orders to proceed to Weymouth to be inspected by the British Authorities before

continuing her voyage with a crew of 49 and 8 passengers. On the 15th September 1939, she had arrived just south of Portland when at 5:55pm there was an explosion near the number two hatch. She lifted 6-7 feet out of the water as a result, fell back and broke her back between the front of the bridge and the number three hold. She sank to lie in about 30 metres of water and her bow section still intact, standing 7m clear of the seabed.

With wall to wall sunshine the viz is incredible and the water a balmy 14 degrees. The structure seems to be entirely covered in jewel anemones and the area well populated with nudibranch, crabs, blennies, pollack and... well... stuff. Brilliant.



The obligatory curry in the evening did not go on into the wee small hours as we have elected for an oh six thirty start (yes that means getting up at 5 in the am). No problem parking at this hour and the gear's still on the boat from yesterday. Grab a few more ZZZzzzs en route to the Aeolian Sky.

If you have an article or story which you want to tell, why not send your article to the Editor of The Dive Club Newsletter

Articles are always needed, long or short!!

This Greek freighter is quite a modern wreck, sunk in 1979 after colliding with another vessel just north of Guernsey during a gale in the Atlantic. It was planned to tow her to Southampton, but the port authorities were concerned she was going to sink in the middle of busy Solent shipping lanes so they turned her away to Portland Harbour. Unfortunately she didn't make it there either and now lies on her port side off St Alban's head. The top sits at about 18m dropping to the 30m sea bed.

This is certainly not the dark and black horrible place of last year. Descending through the rich waters the hull is clearly visible. She is huge and still fairly intact but amidships have collapsed. All along there are holes and hatches that tempt you in but with the viz so good we have no major concerns of ending up inside without knowing it. We have a great time exploring the length of the deck but the current is just too much for me to round the stern so we turn back to investigate more of the decks & holds. Although the Aeolian Sky has been the subject of much salvage, a lot of its cargo is still said to be there, ranging from marmite jars and Land Rovers to shed loads of Seychelles rupees, we failed to find any!

More tea and hot-cross buns (laid on by skipper Phil) await us on ascent and we all enjoy the sunshine before our final dive of the day at the bow section of the Black Hawk. The stern is an entirely different dive somewhere else much deeper.



An American Liberty ship, she was torpedoed by a German sub in December 1944, towed to and sunk in Warborrow Bay. Subsequently blown up to make way for the Winfrith discharge pipeline she is now scattered across the shingled seabed at about 15m, a myriad of fascinating chunks of hull and machinery.



Peering into a hefty cog structure the eye of a very large conger stares back. I can see a sizeable school of pollack or cod or bass or pouting or I don't know what (I am rubbish at UK sea fish) through the perfectly round hole in another hunk of wreckage. This is a great place to root around. After ½ hour pottering amongst the debris we deploy the DSMB and drift off across the ridged terrain. Right into Katie who is trying to stop Simon bringing up what looks like an unexploded bomb!!!

So when people ask about UK diving I say when it's bad it is absolute pants (look back to Simon's report in last June's newsletter) but when it's good you just can't beat it. Looking forward to going back in September. Thanks to Simon for organising a cracking weekend.

Come on now, don't be shy. I'm sure loads of you out there have some great photos or tales to tell about your experiences which you'd like to share with your fellow club members. Or even just ideas for things you'd like to read about.

Please send in any words, pictures and suggestions to be included in future newsletters. I can't promise to publish everything but your contributions are always welcome and one day you're all going to get fed up with my wittering. If you really don't feel you can produce then let me know if there is anything you want to read about and I'll do my best.

So you want to go diving...

With the UK dive season declared well and truly open let's take a small step back and think about all the elements which when brought together make our days out a success – fun and safe.

There is you – keep fit and healthy and refresh your own skills, particularly if it's been a while since you were last in the water.

There is your gear – read later in KitKat about the basics of keeping all your equipment in good working order.

Then there are the Skippers and their craft. At nearly every seaside town all around the British coastline you will find hard boats and RIBs to charter for a day's diving and in some places liveaboards too. Many of the skippers are divers too and have put a lot of thought into rigging their chosen vessels especially with divers in mind. They have designed the layout of the deck so that everyone has sufficient space to set up, secure and store their gear including the spare cylinders.



Bearing in mind our weather is not the kindest, a good boat will have a place where everyone can stay out of the wind and rain or shade from those welcome days of unbroken sunshine (if only there were more). But beware if you enter the wheelhouse in your wet gear, the skipper won't thank you.



Some have a full blown galley to rustle up some serious chow but at the very least they will have lots of hot water flasks to hand out tea, coffee, soup or my favourite hot chocolate. I am always impressed that before I've even got my fins off a welcome steaming mug of something is thrust into my hand – when you think of all the other logistical stuff a skipper has to do, he's still got the diver's warmth and welfare foremost.

Another feature which will make one hardboat your favourite over another is the lift. Now in my conversations with some skippers they said they'd resisted adding this godsend in the past because they (reasonably) thought if a diver is incapable of climbing up a ladder fully kitted they aren't fit enough to be diving at all. But most have seen the investment pay off in spades. It's not just that you'll keep on going back for the easy end to your dive but from a safety point of view it's almost a must. If a diver is exhausted (currents can take it out of you) or the seas are big, a lift can get you back on board in seconds.



So to the men at the helms – unsung heroes. As stalwarts in the diving community they know all about what they're taking you to see. If the weather prohibits going to our pre-elected site / wreck they know all about alternatives. They know how the wreck lies, they know what to look for be it treasure, explosives or wildlife. They offer more than advice like "You won't find any scallops & crabs here this morning but you will on the one we're doing this afternoon; I'll lend you my goody bag if you like!"



Having a tiny bit of experience myself learning to drive a powerboat, I am in awe of the accuracy and delicacy with which these guys (yes I'm afraid the majority if not all of them are guys) can manoeuvre the boat. They can drop the shot line spot on OK they've generally got a lot of electronic toys to help but I'm bugged if I could read them right.

They can spot you and your SMB from significant distances; wasting no time in collecting every buddy pair as they surface often within minutes of each other in that classic scattered starburst pattern, heading straight for you but just an arm's length away. No messing.



Making their living on the water, they are hugely experienced in the conditions and what is and isn't possible. I remember our final dive at Lundy on Obsession last year, as we went rounded the tip of the island it got really choppy. Andy said if you want to go in I can get you out and that's all we needed to hear.



So please listen up at the briefings. Make sure you understand the procedures. Don't be afraid to speak up if you didn't understand. Which buoy marks our shot-line? What is a shot-line? When should I send up the sausage? The only stupid question is the one you didn't ask when you had the chance. And keep all your bits and pieces tidy so no-one trips up damaging themselves or any gear.

One last point if you are going to charter a boat for us – just check out what the toilet, sorry, head facilities are like. It can be a very long day what with all those hot drinks and that curry the night before...



You too could be in print, just email over your articles and or photos for future editions of this newsletter. info@thediveschool.co.uk



Kit Cat Tips on a catalogue of kit

Care

Kit List:-

Mask ✓

Fins ✓

BCD ✓

Weight Systems ✓

Exposure Suits

● Drysuits ✓

● Wetsuits

Regulators ✓

SMBs ✓

Reels ✓

Lights ✓

Care ✓



So you've invested your hard earned cash and you want to make sure that you get the best out of it. Treat it well, store it properly add a little TLC and it will serve you well for many years. But what does that mean.

At the very least always rinse all items in fresh clean water after use. But there some other things you can do for each item.

- **Mask-** If you've bought nothing else this is probably the one thing you own – after all you want to see clearly all that wonderful & colourful underwater stuff. Almost the first skill you'll have learnt is mask de-fogging; the spit and polish thing. Even though masks are essentially water tight, microbes from your saliva and the waters you dive in can get inside the frame. If the frame is coloured you probably won't notice but if like mine it's transparent you can get a pretty disgusting looking growth of gunk. A soak in mild solution of something like Milton will render it more savoury. Milton will also help with mildew on the fabric strap. And if it really gets too much most masks can be completely dismantled. Come and speak to one of us or ask your local dive shop to show you how yours works. A brand new mask may have a slight coating of silicone on the lens from the manufacturing process which makes it prone to fog. With use this soon disappears but if it's not soon enough for you rub a small amount of toothpaste (which is a very fine abrasive) over the glass and rinse. It should help.

Your mask would have come in a box; when not on your face that's where your mask should be. Not stuffed in the foot of your fin for long periods. You don't want it squashed at the bottom of your gear bag, distorting the skirt. Or worse stand on it or have something heavy like weights or a cylinder fall onto it. Not only will the box protect it from blunt force trauma but also isolate it from other substances which could cause chemical damage. And I don't just mean sun cream accidents. Much of your stuff is made from silicone and rubber based materials which over time can have a reaction with each other. Have you every found one of those elastic band balls at the back of a drawer and discovered the bands have stuck together or perished or the colours have bled into each other? All these things can also happen to your gear.



- **Fins** – Your attention here should be on the straps. Check them over to make sure they're not perished or split. Inspect the clips for damage or cracks. If you can, avoid actually unclipping the straps as that's when you're most likely to lose the socket bit from the fin (really irritating). Have spares. Store them flat or hanging not standing on the tips



- **Regulators** – Don't forget the dust cap. Ensure it's dry when you secure it before a dunk in the rinsing tank. While we're on the subject please respect the signs; more often than not the resort or centre will have more than one vat each labelled for specific items; Regs / Cameras ONLY, BCDs, boots suits & fins.



This is to try and keep any sand and crud away from the more delicate bits. And don't depress the purge button when you rinse, which can allow water to seep into the diaphragm mechanism which could cause damage. And send your regs off once a year to be serviced to have any dried on residue removed, the filter, O-rings and other perishable parts replaced.

- **BCD** – Every so often unscrew the dump valves to clean & dry the components. Check the releases for damage, keep any Velcro fasteners clear of particles and inspect the LPI hose for perish/cracks. Be aware the LPI Schroeder valve connector has O-rings too. If you can, store your BCD hanging and partially inflated to keep it at its best.



- **Wetsuit** – nothing wrong with a run through the washing machine but go easy on the detergent. As with any of your gear, do not hang your suit in the garage. I know it seems like a good place (got the height and it doesn't matter about the drips) but fuel fumes, those hydrocarbons, will cause permanent harm to the fabric.

- **Dry suit** – it doesn't matter if you get the inside wet when you rinse your dry suit and probably a good thing as you almost certainly sweat a bit. Hang feet up on a dry suit hanger or improvise with poles or drain-pipe. If you have to store it folded make sure you keep the zip done up and straight. It is a costly business getting one replaced. Keep the zip lubricated with beeswax or special ziplube compounds. In fact there is a bewildering array of proprietary products to clean and care for almost every piece of kit. You can get special anti-fungal spray and use desiccating gel packs in the boots. As with your BCD, pay attention to the dump valve and inflator.



- **Underclothes** – sure, you'll want to wash them but do bear in mind thermals and woolly bear/weasel/baby-grow type garments will lose their thermal properties if you over-wash or use strong detergents. Read the manufacturers care labels.

- **Reel** – Check it runs freely from a mechanical point of view and get into the habit of unwinding and rewinding the line after you've used it. Between you hanging on one end and the SMB bobbing up and down on the other the tension is highly likely to be uneven and probably too tight which could cause snagging or tangling – that's the last thing you want.



- **Cylinder** – Check that the O-ring is still there and not perished. Keep your cylinder in-test, i.e. get it visually inspected every 2½ years, hydrostatic every 5 years and if you use EAN_x have it O₂ cleaned every 12 months. It will be marked to prove it is in-test and a reputable filling station won't fill it without valid certification.

It's impossible to cover everything here so if you're not sure about anything just ask.

You too could be in print, just email over your articles and or photos for future editions of this newsletter. info@thediveschool.co.uk

NEEDED – Ideas and Articles

Your Club, your content

Planned Features next time:

- Trip Reports
- KitCat

Aren't we lucky

There seem to have been a lot of reports recently from around the world of rescued divers. The focus of these tales is obviously on the victims with only a few lines are given on the people and infrastructure involved in bringing them back safely.

We take it for granted when we go out in the car that someone is going to be there to help if things go wrong; whether it's the likes of the AA for breakdowns or the police and ambulance services for more serious circumstances. But what about when we head out to sea?

You may not realise it but here in the UK we have probably one of the best support services you could wish for. And it's all for free!

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency have a vision to be a world-class organisation that is committed to preventing loss of life, continuously improving maritime safety, and protecting the marine environment: Safer Lives, Safer Ships, Cleaner Seas.

Entirely surrounded as we are by the sea, the UK has relatively more coastline than many other countries. A staggering 11.5 million people take part in some kind of coastal activity every year from dossing around on the beach through walking, boating and fishing and of course diving. The Coastguard is there at the end of a phone or over the radio whenever you need them 24x7.



We all take steps to avoid getting into difficulty but accidents can happen and our wonderful weather doesn't help. Diving is classed as a dangerous sport unless you are properly trained. Remember when you got your certification you were told you are qualified to dive in conditions similar to or better than those in which you trained. So if you've just come back from the balmy clear warm waters of the Red Sea, Bali or Barbados don't think you are necessarily ready to chuck yourself in to the choppy cool possibly murky English Channel or the North Sea. Build yourself up gradually. Start with shallow dives. If you can, go out with more experienced divers. Get more training. Don't be afraid not to do a dive if on the day it's plans go awry – rough seas or wind make it more challenging than expected or the site has to be changed to a more demanding one.

However, rest assured that if things do go wrong the Coastguard is there to help either with advice or physical presence and has immediate access to other organisations including medical care. Time is of the essence and if a diver is in trouble it is imperative to get them the proper assistance as soon as possible. A helicopter can be there in minutes to whisk them back to safety.



The Coastguard also operates a voluntary scheme to register your plans. So if you are at sea and get into difficulty they have details of where you/your boat are likely to be and what you are doing.



And for Search and Rescue they've set up a framework working with other organisations (including the police, fire service, ambulance, RNLI and DTI) whose key function is to co-ordinate Maritime Search and Rescue in offshore, inshore and shoreline areas, aeronautical Search and Rescue over land and sea as well as inland

operations. These are successful because of the combined ability of the various bodies to:

- a) receive details of persons, vessels and aircraft in distress
- b) communicate between units and the co-ordinating authority
- c) provide assistance to persons, vessels and aircraft in distress
- d) deliver survivors to a place of safety or where further assistance can be given



When we go diving abroad you expect to pay for related extras; diving insurance, marine park fees, jetty tax, hyperbaric chamber contribution etc. But over here it's a given. So next time you look at your payslip and feel resentful of the amount that's gone into Alistair Darling's coffers just remember some of it has gone into funding this fantastic service that gives you that peace of mind.

The Club Rules

Club rules for 2007 as follows:

1. Membership fee for 2007 is £25 payable in January and will be subject to review in November each year. Members will be notified of any increase in fees a month before the due payment date.
2. For members joining between 1st September and December in any club year, their membership will expire on the 31st December in the following year.
3. The club committee will be made up of:
 - a) Chairperson - Simon Holmes/Dave Griffiths
 - b) Secretary - Katie Parkhouse
 - c) Social Secretary - Vacant
 - d) Event coordinators - Vacant
 - e) Newsletter - Amanda Spencer
4. Non-members attending club events will be charged a nominal £10 fee per event.
5. Members benefits include:
 - a) 50% discount on equipment hire
 - b) organised dive and social activities
 - c) newsletter

The rules are subject to review on a regular basis. Any changes will be notified to members in writing.

Please note: As of January 2008 The Dive School is NO longer in a position to offer equipment to hire; the logistics of hiring the kit are not compatible with our other business activities and the hire fees do not cover the servicing and repair fees.

Kit will be provided to students undertaking courses with The Dive School.

The Dive School

Courses 2008



DATES OF OUR FORTHCOMING **PADI** COURSES:

PADI Open Water Referral - 5 weeks @ Pool Tuesday evenings

Five-week referral courses (Tuesday Evening)
Classroom @ 6.30pm Pool @ 8.30pm

8th July – 5th August
12th August - 9th September
16th September – 14th October
21st October – 18th November
25th November – 23rd December

Try dives - Pool Saturday evening @ 6.30pm

12 th July	9 th August	13 th September
11 th October	8 th November	13 th December

PADI Open Water Referral - Intensive weekends

Saturday	Classroom – 12.15 until 6 pm	Pool – 6.30 pm until 9.45 pm
Sunday	Classroom – 2 pm until 6 pm	Pool – 6.30 pm until 9.45 pm

26 th /27 th July	23 rd /24 th August
25 th /26 th October	22 nd /23 rd November

Open Water training courses:

Held over a weekend usually either at Wraysbury or Stoney Cove

2nd/3rd August Open Water and Advanced Open Water

Other dates to be confirmed.

We will notify you of any Specialty courses we are planning which are likely to include including Deep, Enriched Air, Dry Suit, Equipment, Wreck and Dan 02 Provider. There are over 20 PADI Specialty courses and it's not practical for us to run some of them but please contact Simon or Katie if there is something you'd like to learn about.

Contact Information

If you have any contributions to The Dive Club newsletter or suggestions for future events, please forward your suggestions to Simon or Katie at The Dive School (info@thediveschool.co.uk), or telephone them on 0118 933 1792.

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