



The Dive Club Newsletter

February 2009

Spring Edition

Don't miss the club night at the Black Boy Pub, Shinfield.

Wed 4th February from 7:30 pm

Be there and support your dive club

Need to go diving then come along to one of the many events planned for this year

News update



Theme for this issue is Beginnings...

This is it folks. If any of you read my blurb in February you might remember small reference to a plan, imminent poverty and exit stage left to a bamboo hut somewhere warm.

Well it seems to have turned into reality. No more day job - next stop Bali for our new start

Only a million things to do in the next 5 weeks or so (like confirm our flights, get a Visa, find somewhere to live, get rid of 20 years worth of STUFF from the house to make room for the tenants we haven't yet found, wonder who'd like a very friendly 21 year old mog who wasn't still meant to be around, get our regulators serviced, last dental check-up and so the list goes on...) You'd have thought with 5 years planning we would be ready. It's just like homework. You have the entire summer holiday to write an essay but you wait until the day before term starts to read the book.

So what's going to happen to this you cry? I'm not leaving you in the lurch. Charles Emes has kindly (or foolishly) accepted the challenge of producing this quarterly missive. A bit more about him later and I'm sure you'll meet at the Club if you haven't already. Please be kind to him and help out when he asks for contributions.

For the rest of the summer you've got lots to do. Hopefully you've secured a place on one of the boats we've chartered (see the diary) and in August there's our Annual Summer Barbeque to look forward to.

Let it shine 😊

Club Nights

We're half way through 2009 already!!!!

Join us on the first Wednesday in every month for a mix of chatting, eating & drinking from 7:30pm.



Usual venue, The Black Boy in Shinfield. Don't forget your cheque books if you've still got deposits to pay for any dive trips you're down for.

Following on from its success last year another date for your diary - the club night in August (Wednesday 5th) will be a BBQ, again down at The Black Boy. Free to all club members, there will be a minimal charge of £5 per non member.

Dive Diary 2009

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

13th & 14th June – Weymouth

All levels. £82 for two dives per day. **3 Spaces**

12th July – Isle of Wight

Dives to be decided by max 25 metres £45 for the 2 dives **1 Space**

8th & 9th August – Lundy Island

We reach this magical island by boat from Ilfracombe. Experienced divers only. £117. **2 Spaces**

15th August – Swanage

Depths around 28 metres for advanced divers £40 for 2 dives. **Full**

15th August – Swanage

Depths around 36 metres for advanced divers £40 for 2 dives. **Full**

6th September – Littlehampton

Dives to be decided by max 18 metres £45 for the 2 dives. **4 spaces**

12th September – West Bay (nr Bridport, Dorset)

30m or shallower intermediate to advanced £44 for 2 dives (includes hot drinks and snacks) **1 space**

19th and 20th September – Weymouth

All levels. £82 for two dives per day. **7 Spaces**

26th – 28th September – St Abbs

We visited the area last year - fantastic diving & good nights out

Fri Sep 25th - Travel up to Eyemouth under your own steam

Sat/Sun/Mon 26/27/28 Sep - diving around Eyemouth and St.Abbs

Mon 28 PM - travel back

We will try to organise a night dive on the Sat or Sun for any interested

6 spaces

Volunteers are always welcome to organise more dives wherever you'd like to go. If you are unsure about how to go about it please contact us for hints & tips.

Beginning the season

The Dive Club first outing 2009 – Malta

In a break with tradition for our first club outing of the year we decided not to brave the frigid waters of Stoney Cove, favouring instead the somewhat milder Mediterranean sea around the coast of Malta – what better way to wash away those credit crunch blues! So, with expectations high, 15 intrepid members left a rainy London Gatwick for a long weekend under the Mediterranean sun.

After an uneventful flight we convened at around 4.30pm at Luqa airport where the nice people from Divewise in St. Julians met us and transferred us all to the dive centre. On the journey there, one of the party got it into his head (ROB) that there might be enough time for a sneaky first dive on the house reef before checking in

to the hotel etc. So the calls were made from the minibus on the way from the airport and cylinders were prepared for our first foray into Maltese waters, at the 'Divewise' house reef. It was a good dive, most notable by the fact that we got a daytime and a night dive all rolled into one! It was also notable as the dive where Charles earned his new nickname – "One Fin"!!



Our second day took us all to Cirkawwa in the North of Malta where we split into two groups, one group diving Cirkawwa arch and the other swimming out to the wreck of the Rozi, with fireworms and nudibranchs along the way.

Then, after sampling some Maltese cheesy delicacies in our surface interval, a second dive around the reefs of Cirkawwa rewarded us with swimming among hundreds of beautifully coloured jellyfish.

On the Sunday we all got up early to take the ferry over to Gozo and dive the famous Inland Sea and Blue Hole/Azure Window sites. Again we were treated to Nudibranchs, scorpion fish and all manner of other critters along the way. Both vehicles only just managing to squeeze into the final spaces on the ferry before it left. Duly satisfied with our days diving, we made the trip back to St. Julians for a well-earned traditional Maltese Indian meal!



Monday dawned bright and our last day of diving soon got underway, with one group travelling to Manoel Island to dive the X127 Lighter, or Carolita as it's also known, and another group electing to dive the wreck of a Bristol Beaufighter that ditched about a mile off shore during world war II. Both dives were very good but the highlight of the morning had to be when Abeeda completed her final open water training dive and joined our ranks as a qualified diver – Well Done Abeeda!!



For our final dive Krista and Rob were tasked with leading two parties out to the wreck of the HMS Mauri as exercises for their Divemaster training. In world war II, the Mauri suffered the unfortunate fate of snagging a parachute flare in her mast, thus lighting her up like a Christmas tree and offering some unexpected target practice for the German bomber pilots flying their mission that night. Today she is

broken in half and in a poor state but offers a home to many species of fish and other creatures.

Our guided dives were achieved with impeccable precision and professionalism (of course!) – despite the efforts of certain instructors among us trying to make things interesting (you know who you are!!). While exploring the wreck and its surroundings beneath St. Elmo bay we found some sea horses – a first time sighting for some of us! What better way to end the weekends diving, sea horses on the dive and Krista earning his Divemaster certification – Well Done Krista!!



With no early morning schedule and flights late on Tuesday it was time to let the hair down on Monday night (OK, with the exception of Rob, Charles and Simon, for obvious reasons!) and much partying went on until the wee hours.

So it was back to Blighty on Tuesday night – 15 very tired but happy divers.

Report courtesy of Rob Randall – many thanks

Meet the new editor

Charles Emes

Age: Exactly the same age as my twin brother

Marital status: Single parent with two wonderful daughters

Diver since: October 2008

What do I do for a living? I'd rather not say. No really, don't ask unless you have a high threshold of boredom.

What inspired me to start diving? These words: "If you can't get to Outer Space, try scuba diving, it's the next best thing". How true that is.

My journey to becoming a diver: You've heard of the "Bucket List"? The 10 things you have to do before you die? One of mine was to "dive the Great Barrier Reef" even though I had never dived before. But why should that stop me? So when the opportunity came up to go to Oz last year I had to see if I could cross off one of the items from my Bucket List.

But I decided to take things one step at a time. Starting with a try dive seemed like a good idea. So when I was handed a brochure about the "Try Dive" at Loddon Valley Leisure Club organised by the Dive School I had to give it a go. I drew the short straw. I got Simon.

I'm kidding. His enthusiasm was inspirational. I signed up immediately for the intensive PADI Open Water course. I nearly flunked the theory. I was under a lot of stress at work and hadn't had time to read the manual fully. I was "cramming" during the breaks and studying my dive tables at the last minute. It was one of the most nerve racking exams I've ever taken only because I was so desperate to pass it. My instructor was Amanda, I could have wished for no-one better. I'm only now realising how fortunate I was. That training was drilled into me and I'm never going to forget it. Amanda can be tough when necessary but I wouldn't have wanted it any other way - it's my life at stake after all.

Do you remember doing your confined water dives? I struggled with mask clearing. I struggled with regulator recovery. I struggled with buoyancy (I still do!). And then came the Open Water dives. In Wraysbury. In October. In a



semi-dry! Actually it was a glorious sunny weekend, as perfect as you can get for autumn. But that weekend my life was in turmoil and I had to get my head straight to get on with the diving skills. Amanda got me to concentrate and once in the water I relaxed and enjoyed myself. That was the most important thing I learnt - leave your

troubles behind before getting into the water.

Now you would think that after the angst I went through that I would have been delighted to get my Open Water certificate. It meant I could go to Oz and dive the GBR. But for me it wasn't about that piece of plastic. It was about the opportunity it opened up for me to travel and meet people and explore this unique underwater environment. I needed something to get my life back into perspective and to my surprise and delight that turned out to be diving. My life has turned around. Diving has become a passion and I'm delighted to share that with other members of the Dive Club.



Who has inspired me most about diving? Amanda, because of her professionalism and enthusiasm as an instructor. But most of all because when I get in a tricky situation underwater I'll be picturing her jabbing a finger into her temple - the sign to "THINK". That's going to save my life one day.

Best dive ever: "Steve's Bommie", Great Barrier Reef. The most amazing collection of fish tightly packed around a pinnacle of coral on one of the Outer Reefs. I was doing my "marine life identification" dive as part of my Advanced Open Water. My words to my instructor when reaching the surface were "Let's be honest, I've seen the entire ***ing reference book". There are 1500 species of fish in the GBR and you can see most of them there.



Best dive experience: Deep Sea Divers Den live-aboard boat out of Cairns. Great crew. Very professional PADI certified divers. Word of caution here: it's my only live-aboard experience to date!!!

Most impressive marine life seen: A column of identical hydroids connected together in a chain about 8 metres long during the dive club trip to Malta.



Where would I most like to dive next:

- Maldives amongst the giant manta rays.
- Sipadan amongst turtles, barracuda and leopard sharks
- Galapagos amongst the sea lions
- GBR again amongst the Minke whales



Best eating place: Raw Prawn, Cairns. "One of the best seafood restaurants in Oz."

Really hate: The Japanese whaling fleet. Underwater tourists. Rap music. Marmite.

Passionate about: 1.4 billion cubic kilometres of ocean and its inhabitants.



Over to you Charles – go for it.

LUNDY 2008

I'd been looking forward to this trip for over a year, having missed out on the one last year and I wasn't disappointed, despite drawing the short straw and being on the older of the two boats without the luxury of a diver lift.



Things weren't looking that good on the way down as we got hit by some seriously heavy rain showers but they'd cleared up by the time we got to Ilfracombe. Come Saturday morning it was dry, though still rather windy which made the hour and forty minute boat ride out rather bumpy. So there were a couple of green faces by the time we got to the sheltered waters on the east of Lundy and not everyone felt up to the first dive. A shame as we could see a couple of seals close to the island and hoped they might be curious enough to come and find us.



And so they did, we had a few do a 'fly past' as we were weaving our way through the gardens of kelp, weed and soft corals. Visibility was pretty good with just a bit of plankton 'snow' and very good light underwater so the colours looked very pretty. Soon enough our planned 40 minutes were up but the lack of diver lift was no problem in the calm shallow waters and we were all sipping hot drinks and munching on a fine selection of chocolate biscuits provided by the skipper.



The second dive was to be on a wreck which we were told was very broken up and some divers didn't find it. Despite a delay whilst we got a bit more weight from the boat to sink my buddy properly and consequently drifting a little we dropped down right on top of the wreckage and had a good mooch about looking for lobsters etc. but didn't see any this time. As soon as we were back aboard the skipper took us straight back to port pausing briefly to spy some porpoises in the distance.

This gave us plenty of time to shower / kip / get to the hotel bar before heading en mass to the now traditional curry. Fortunately Simon had booked this well ahead of time as getting a table for 20+ hungry divers on a Saturday night would have been tricky.

Sunday morning was a similarly early start so no chance of a cooked breakfast in our hotel again but the sky was looking brighter and the wind had dropped.



The trip over was indeed much smoother and everyone held on to their breakfasts and were keen to get in the water again.

Our first dive was a deeper one around a pinnacle, there was another smaller pinnacle we were supposed to go round as well but we didn't find it.

Lots of life again with a couple of big lobsters out on the sea bed and not worried about divers poking cameras at them, it seems they know they're safe in Lundy's waters so are quite brazen.



Lots of colourful weed and soft corals again and a couple of patches of jewel anemones as well as plenty of the larger ones. We also saw 4 or 5



sizeable dogfish and various jellyfish from tiny comb jellies no bigger than your fingernail through to plate-sized moon jellies and a couple of 'Purple Nasties'. Apparently that is their correct name, not just their reputation. I had to untangle one of these from my buddy on the safety stop in case she got a faceful when surfacing, though with drysuit, gloves and hood they weren't likely to cause us any problem.

After a surface interval with more chocolate biscuits supplemented by Jaffa Cakes and malt loaf (we divers come prepared) the skipper gave us the option of another wreck dive or a shallow dive where the seals were. A bit of a no-brainer, we all agreed, we can dive wrecks in the Channel any weekend so we opted to go and play with the seals again.

And they did come and play this time, with one of them having a good nibble at my buddies fins. Eventually we had to tear ourselves away and swim back to the boat again. As it turned out this was probably the better boat to be on as we had a small pod of porpoises alongside for a while on the way back.

Once we were ashore and had lugged all the kit off the boat there was time for fish and chips by the harbour before the other boat got back.



Will I be booking on the 2009 trip? Let me just check my diary...

Humble apologies to Stig from the exiting editor for losing this article first time round – hope it won't put you off writing more.

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!!

The Club Rules

Club rules for 2009 has now been finalized as follows:

1. Membership fee for 2009 is £30 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
 - b) Secretary - Katie Parkhouse
 - c) Social Secretary - Vacant
 - d) Event coordinators - Vacant
4. Non-members attending club events will be charged a nominal £10 fee per event.
5. Members benefits include:
 - a) organised dives
 - b) social activities
 - c) newsletter

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

Equipment Hire

As of January 2008 The Dive School will NO longer be in a position to hire kit, 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 2009

DATES OF OUR FORTHCOMING **PADI** COURSES:

PADI Open Water Referral - 5 weeks @ Pool Tuesday evenings

Classroom @ 6:30pm Pool @ 8:30 pm

20th Jan - 17th Feb
24th Feb - 24th Mar
31st Mar - 28th Apr
5th May - 2nd Jun
9th Jun - 7th Jul
14th Jul - 11th Aug
18th Aug - 15th Sep
22nd Sep - 20th Oct
27th Oct - 24th Nov

Try dives - Pool Saturday evening @ 6.30pm

PADI Open Water Referral - Intensive weekends

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| 21 st /22 nd Feb | 27 th /28 th Jun | 27 th /28 th Oct |
| 21 st /22 nd Mar | 25 th /26 th Jul | 21 st /22 nd Nov |
| 25 th /26 th Apr | 22 nd /23 rd Aug | |
| 23 rd /24 th May | 21 st /22 nd Sep | |

Open Water Qualifying Dive Weekends

Dates for open water courses to be confirmed including Advanced Open Water, Specialties and Rescue Diver Weekends.

There are over 20 PADI Specialty courses and it's not practical for us to run some of them. The most popular ones include Deep, Enriched Air, Dry Suit, Equipment, Wreck and Dan 02 Provider but please contact Simon or Katie on 0118 976 2900 or info@thediveschool.co.uk if there is something you are interested in for further details.

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 976 2900.

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