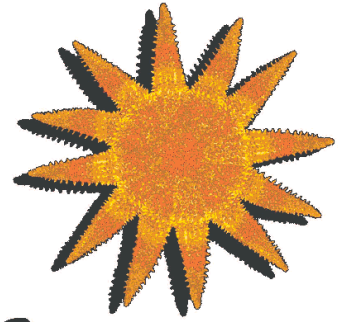


February 2008

SubScript

The Sunstar Sub Aqua Newsletter

www.sunstar.org.uk



**Sunstar
Sub Aqua**

Blimey! Is it February already?

Hello everyone. Welcome to a new edition of SubScript. Some hardy types ventured out in January for a surprisingly warm and sunny trip to Gildenburgh but in general, there's not much diving going on. Why not pop down to the pool and brush up on some skills or have a chat about some of the great trips lined up this year.

There's less than a month to go until the Red Sea trip and I'm writing this having just come back from the BSAC Instructor Foundation Course.

We've got four new assistant instructors in the club and they're keen to get teaching so we need some more OD trainees - find some friends, family, colleagues or pets and bring them to the pool for a try dive.

A message from the committee (exclusive)

Dear members,

Some may remember that the issue of instructors' expenses was brought up at the last AGM, particularly the issue of "fairness", and the committee took an action to discuss this and if possible resolve the issues.

For some years it has been policy for instructors in the club, at their discretion, to expect their students to cover their out of pocket expenses for undertaking their training on the club's behalf. Such expenses were limited to gas fills, site entry, and possibly subsidised travel (e.g. not to be expected to pay for fuel when sharing a lift), but always at the discretion of the instructors.

Some instructors feel strongly the need to have these costs covered, while others feel equally strongly that they should cover them themselves. It isn't helpful to try to decide which of these feelings is correct as circumstances vary, but the fact leads to unfairness in that some students have greater costs for their instruction than others. To try to accommodate the wishes of all our instructors while keeping the playing field level, the committee has agreed the following:

All instructors will in future claim expenses, still at their discretion, from the branch rather than from the individual students.

All students will pay a flat rate of £5 to the club for each day they are benefiting from training, to be offset against instructor expenses.

A budget limit of £140 will be set for the net cost of instruction expenses so paid and claimed. If this is exceeded the committee will review what has happened and adjust the policy accordingly.

At the end of the year the totals of instructor expenses and training fees paid will be made clear in the accounts, so the branch members have visibility of who is subsidising what, and the policy will be adjusted accordingly.

As always issues concerning money can prove contentious, but the committee hopes that the proposals will be seen by members as fairer and so address the issue brought up at the AGM.

Crikey! We have a new committee

Here they are in all their glory: All fine and upstanding pillars of the club. **THANKS FOR VOLUNTEERING. YOUR EFFORTS ARE APPRECIATED!**

Post	Holder
<i>Chairman</i>	John Cook
<i>Diving Officer</i>	Raj Mistry
<i>Training Officer</i>	Dave Parkinson
<i>Secretary</i>	Pete Young
<i>Treasurer</i>	Chris Hall
<i>Expeditions Officer</i>	Paul Mann
<i>Communications Officer</i>	Toby Hope
<i>Minibus Officer</i>	Matt Yates
<i>Boat Officer</i>	Dave Lock
<i>Equipment Officer</i>	Chris Bond
<i>Social Secretary</i>	Chris Nixon
<i>New Member's Rep</i>	Andy Keeble

HOW DEEP IS YOUR LOVE?*

- Áine Corrigan

So I got this new boyfriend who likes Scuba diving. I'm scared of water. They say opposites attract...

Never one to turn down a challenge, and in an attempt to overcome my nervousness of the water, I joined the Adastral Park Sunstar sub-aqua club in September. Following some 'Back to school' physics and physiology lessons in the class room, and some 'swimming lessons with a difference' in Fore Street pool, I was ready for the Open Water!

However my approach to this was a little different to most (no thanks to that boyfriend). No tropical holiday, no amazing coral, no brilliant blue seas nor golden beaches for me! I had my first underwater experiences in flooded brick and stone quarries around the UK.

Finally, approaching the end of my training I was invited on a diving holiday. Woo-hoo! Caribbean here we come! I should have known better. Before I knew it I was in the Lake District, it was hailing, the wind was blowing over trees and ice was forming on the windscreen! Despite this (and with the help of woolly jumpers and a waterproof dry suit), I was privileged enough to see the bottom of the lakes West Water and

Crummock Water. See the attached photo - I'm the one in blue!



I managed to qualify on New Year's Eve, and we all had fun. I would thoroughly recommend it as a rather different way to spend your Christmas holidays! I'm now looking forward to getting the next qualification. I just need to find myself a better boyfriend...

Áine

*sorry

Scapa Flow September 2007

- Bob Crawley

When I started diving it was with the intention of doing it in warm, sunny places so did my first few PADI certification dives in Australia. Discussing the merits of diving in UK with a hard bitten Ozzie diver he protested that Britain had the best diving in World and that Scapa Flow was the Bee's Knees (or something like that (How about Dingo's Dangles? Ed)). Despite training with Sunstar in 2002 I realised that I wasn't proficient enough for the club's trip that year and, for one reason and another, have had to wait until 2007 to dive Scapa Flow which is a sheltered bay in the Orkney Islands just to the North of the top of Scotland.

Galaxsea's trip

Galaxsea Divers organised this trip last year and we were meant to be a party of twelve. Those that dropped out missed a great week but did the rest of us a great favour by giving us more boat space: their loss our gain. From the Sunstar club we had David, Pete and myself plus Paul and his wife Fi(ona) who was along to tour the islands. Steve from Galaxsea, James and finally Danny from Shropshire completed our party. Paul slept ashore and the rest of stayed on board. David, Pete and I flew up and back on Saturday. The others travelled in Paul's Discovery towing all the kit in a trailer (thanks chaps). Better flight planning on our part would have meant less time waiting in Kirkwall although this would have reduced our time after diving below 24

hours. The fliers actually got home two hours before those who had set off early and driven.

At the start of the trip we were invited to take part in a DAN trial run by the local hyperbaric chamber (useful thing to have around). This meant completing a questionnaire after each dive and 48 hours after finishing. We were each issued with a Suunto computer to log our dives for the trial. Scapa is an excellent place for studying DCI as the number of dives made is known to a high degree of accuracy unlike elsewhere.

Orcadian Weather

The weather has been often windy and generally dull with a little rain but the Orkneys in September could have been worse. The skipper mentioned that they might get a couple of force 12s a year and have had 170mph which is off the scale. They are used to it; roof tiles are nailed down although he did say that once a chicken coop got blown away. It surprised me that it was nowhere near as scary as I thought it would be diving in fairly rough conditions. I'd say the chances of getting "blown out" here are much lower than most UK diving venues and given the fantastic range of wrecks this has to be the top spot for UK diving. Visibility was generally 10m+ up to 20m although it's better early in the season. Having said that I don't think you'd want to come early in the year as the sea is still only 12 degrees and one gets a little cool after the long second dive. I was pleasantly surprised by how easy it was to cope with what I initially thought were winds and seas too rough for diving.

The Jean Elaine – home for the week.



Jean Elaine is a converted trawler skippered by Andy Cuthbertson, a one time Scallop diver. The crew and chef de cuisine is Ronnie who serves an excellent "brunch"

after the morning dive together with amusing banter a little of which I understood by Friday but I never managed to figure out what "Scabby Doos" were. He caters well for non meat eaters. The daily pattern is that we sleep on board (not as nice as the Red Sea by a long shot but we are on one of the best boats - Pete described the others as similar with added squalour). The "pit" cabin, where Pete and I slept the first night, was once probably the crew's quarters. It has four bunks with about 3" headroom and no portholes. When we found a better twin cabin Pete decided to stay in the "pit" rather than share with me in first class. Perhaps I snore or something worse? Each morning the Stromness ferry on the adjacent berth starts loading lorries at about 4:30 so sleep is fitful from then onwards. There are three double bunk cabins and two singles in the converted forward fish hold. Other than the singles there is insufficient headroom to read unless you are myopic. On the first night it was cold but subsequently the oil heater was turned on and we were then toasty warm below decks.

The living area has two tables and a kitchen. Space wise there was enough room with seven of us on board but the full complement of twelve would be, in my view, uncomfortable. There are two normal style toilets which conveniently flush into the Flow, or any boat moored alongside. The shower is hot. Deck space is ample and kitting up is easy. Entry is by long stride amidships, there is no lift but Ronnie has an excellent fishing hook system to help you up the ladder. The only boat we saw with a lift was the Valkyrie. This has an all female crew which might appeal to some but I'd find intimidating. The boat handles well and in any case the sea in the flow was not too rough even when the weather was bad. The boat rolls a little but I was told that this is a design feature so that the nets can be hauled in by a ratchet system (sounds reasonable). We did see the Preston Sub Aqua club on their Crompton RIB during the week but they must have been quite uncomfortable in the conditions. In any case it can't be economic to bring a RIB up here.

Great Diving

There are three types of dive that we have been doing:-

- The Imperial German Fleet which was scuttled in June 1919 while the fleet was incarcerated pending the Armistice agreement. There is a conspiracy theory that says that the British were complicit in the scuttling as we did not want the German fleet to shared with our Allies France and Italy. The fact that our fleet went out on exercise on the day adds some credence to this although who knows. The story of what happened is fascinating and worth reading even if you never come here. It cannot be done justice as part of this article. We dived the 26,000 ton Battleships Konig and Kronprinz Wilhelm, 5000 ton Cruisers Karlsrhue, Coln and Brummer, Destroyer Dresden and WW2 Destroyer V83. We didn't get time to dive the Bayern turrets. These are simply the gun turrets that fell out from the Battleships as they turned turtle. They weigh 600 tons, the same as the James Barrie, and it's possible to get inside and actually dive below the sea bed.
- The Churchill Barrier Blockships, salvage vessels and German ships that the British were trying to beach to save immediately after the scuttling. In one instance there is a salvage vessel that was recovering a Bofors anti aircraft gun from F2 (another WW2 ship) when it sank in a storm. These we dived together traveling between them using the line. We also dived Tabarka twice (except for Steve!) and Doyle both of which were very pretty and reminiscent of the Dunraven in the Red Sea.
- The James Barrie, separate because it's outside the Flow and wasn't deliberately sunk.

We get up at a normal time, have breakfast then go out from Stromness into the Flow. It takes an hour or so to reach the German fleet and about two to get to the John Barrie at the entrance. We dive one of the German Wrecks in the morning, these are not really tidal so the actual time does not matter. They are in the 30-40m range. Most are quite dark as the battleships are inverted and some of the cruisers lie on their sides with the deck to the north so there is little light in the morning. The battleships and even the cruisers are

immense. When you land on the upturned hull of the Konig you think it's the sea bed as there is growth everywhere and you can't see any edges. It's also quite light as it's only about 20m. When you go over the edge though it's another dive again to the sea bed at 38m where it's black under the inverted main deck. An HID torch is very useful at this point. All the guns and top hamper have been forced by her mass deep into the sea bed. At one point the armour is exposed and it's about a foot thick. Each German ship is covered in anemones because it is an enemy warship.



What a spectacle it must have been in 1918 when the British Fleet escorted the disarmed German Fleet into the flow and the World's two largest fleets lay at anchor.



The James Barrie was a 40m long 600 tonne trawler. Minute compared to the German ships but still a good size wreck. After being holed in its ice store this sank, once the ice melted, at the entrance to the flow in 40m in the 1960's. She lies on her side and is more or less intact. Visibility was stunning and it was possible to see both bow and stern simultaneously from the line. The James Barrie is tidal and strangely the two slacks are only about 90 minutes apart. This is because it's at the

confluence of the Atlantic Ocean and North Sea with the two tidal systems coming up against each other.

After our morning dive we have brunch and motor across to the Churchill Barriers. In the early afternoon we dive one of the shallow block ships. These were sunk on orders of the First Sea Lord, Winston Churchill, during the First World War to prevent enemy submarines getting into the Flow. The block ships are shallow, light and pretty dives with lots of anemones, dead men's fingers and such like adorning every surface. There is also plenty of kelp and an abundance of fish. Because they form the only route in and out of the flow for the sea these shallow gaps between the islands experience strong currents. Dives need to be planned so that they start somewhere near slack water with a negative entry drift onto the wreck and finish with an incoming tide. When you see the waters outside the Flow you realise that the only way you want to drift is inwards! These second dives are quite long, typically 50 - 60 minutes.



The limitation is either cold or needing to go to the loo. Launching the DSMB at the end of the dive from within the wreck is interesting as the buoy flies off at a great rate of knots and threatens to take all the line with it. Steve managed to miss one of these wrecks, The Tabarka, twice although in neither case was it his fault and he saw some nice Kelp and even a seal. On the surface the current is strong but fortunately the skipper manoeuvres the boat to within a couple of feet. Ronnie drops his hook onto the scuba set and tugs you up.



Sounds funny but it works fine. We had a basking shark swimming around the boat on Wednesday, Danny jumped in to swim with it and was promptly swept away by the current. We recovered him some time later.

Diver Requirements

Kit - a twin set or at least a 15L with a Pony is essential. Nitrox makes a great deal of sense for the morning dives. Cost of Nitrox was about £4.50 per cylinder so £45 for the week for a twin set. Good thermal protection is strongly recommended unless you are a Scot. I wore a chill cheater and a Weezle under my membrane suit and was OK on the first dive but getting a bit cool at the end of the second dive. Hood and gloves are essential. The second dive tends to be fairly long so you could cut it short if cold. A DSMB and reel is essential although on all the morning dives we ascended using the shot (but you might not have time to get back to it on the Cruisers and Battleships). There is a dive shop if you need spares. The dives are suitable for an experienced Sports Diver used to UK conditions. Three of our party used decompression stage cylinders and we had one re-breather although it did not seem that they got that much more bottom time than David on his 15L other than on the James Barrie.

Stromness and around

Stromness is a harbour used primarily by the ferry to Scotland and about a dozen dive boats. There are a few other working boats. It has two pubs and the Stromness hotel all of which serve reasonable food. There is also a Bistro and a Chippy. It is possible to prepare food on board in the evening and I did this a few times. Cell phone coverage is poor with Vodafone and O2 being best, Orange non existent. There are good pay showers in the ferry terminal although the one on the boat is OK. All the

facilities are near to the quayside. It's about 17 miles from the airport at Kirkwall - £28 by taxi, £2.30 by bus. The bus leaves five minutes before the 'plane lands!



There is a Scapa Flow Museum at Lyness and one lunchtime the boat stopped there so we could visit it. A propeller from a the British Battleship Hampshire (yet another story) is on display along with many other interesting exhibits.

If you have transport there are several things to see on the island. Skara Brae is a 5000 year old Stone Age village.



The houses boast built in dressers, beds and cupboards all made of stone as trees are rare on the Orkneys. There are at least two Stone Circles. These are actually very sophisticated and display a deep understanding of the motions of the Sun and Moon. It is possible to measure the 18.6 year Lunar Cycle as well as charting the progression of the year. These were not a primitive people and there is some evidence that they traded as far South as Spain or, perhaps, even Malta. It is not known why they disappeared although Climate change is a likely reason. There are probably other attractions but I was busy diving.

A great week's diving and a "must do" diving experience. The problem is that I don't think it can get better than Scapa. Go for it!

Bob Crawley - September 2007

PERSONALITY PROFILE



John Cook, Chairman

I got into diving in 1991 by joining this same club, then called the BT Research Sub Aqua Club, and affiliated to the SAA rather than BSAC.

I joined with Frances because we had got bored with just swimming having taken adult improver swimming lessons from the council for a few years on account of being virtual non-swimmers! It took us over a year to complete our pool training partly I suppose because we weren't very good students, but mainly I am sure because the club and the training programme was a pretty ad-hoc affair in those days. Obviously we did eventually finish and went on to go diving...

Over the intervening years we have done rather a lot of diving all over the world and enjoyed much of it, both in the UK and abroad in California, British Columbia, Florida, Mexico, Caribbean, Ireland, Spain, Italy, Malta, Egypt, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand. As a result it's hard to say which was my best diving experience, but there have certainly been some memorable ones. I remember a day off Felixstowe when we went out on the club boat and the sea was literally flat and mirror calm (Force zero) and the sun was shining. We had a rather ordinary dive if I remember, but it was a fantastic experience nevertheless. Then in Norfolk we did a dive on a paddle steamer, again from the club boat, and again on a perfect day, but on that occasion the dive too was magical with the viz so good we could see one paddle from the other of the steamer, both full of fish.

In Northern Ireland we dived on a wreck that was full of tame congers, taking a net bag full of fish to feed them. There were dozens of them and they were not at all shy, coming out of everywhere and swimming round our legs and snatching bits of fish out of our fingers. That is the only dive I've done to a maximum depth of just

21m where I managed to run into deco time. It was fascinating.

I really love shoals of fish; they are fascinating to watch. The best experience of this type was with a shoal of pilchards off the coast of Mexico. It was massive, so massive that as we swam under it it darkened the sky, and then looking up there was a round tunnel through it caused by the fish avoiding our bubbles, and the sides of that tunnel glistened with sun light being reflected off their bodies.

In Indonesia, off the island of Maratua we did a dive in truly fantastic viz so that a huge vista of coral reef was visible at once, and in the vista within sight at the same time were reef sharks, turtles and a shoal of barracuda.

In the Coral Sea off Australia we did a shark-feed cage dive, but the operators did not deem it necessary for us to be inside the cage until the climax of the feed, so during the build up to the feed, we were just on top of the cage and literally hundreds of reef sharks turned up and swam round and round in front of us waiting for the feed. They were passing within inches of our masks and occasionally even bumped into divers or had to be pushed out of the way. Awesome.

Of course there have also been some bad experiences along the way, some of them admittedly very bad indeed. In the end it is the people involved in the sport that will help you enjoy the good times and also help you through the bad times. Overall diving has definitely been a positive experience in my life and I wouldn't want to do without it, which is why I'm still doing it. I intend to keep doing as much diving as possible for as long as I still can.

Four Go Mad in Norwich

- Toby Hope

A bunch of us (Graham, Matt, Paul and myself) had the honour of becoming Assistant Instructors this weekend. We headed up to Norwich Girls' School on Saturday morning for the two days of lectures, chat, practical demonstrations and theory which makes up the BSAC Instructor Foundation Course. The facilities at the school were great – the pool was lovely and warm and there were as many Jaffa Cakes as we could eat, this was a lot of Jaffa Cakes.

We were split into groups of two or three and assigned instructors for the weekend – this ratio was very generous: in my group we actually had 2 instructors for 2 students, so there was loads of advice and help available.

We had the occasional fairly dry lecture, but for the most part, the presentations and demonstrations were well thought-out, polished, engaging and very informative (as you'd hope for a weekend about learning to teach).

The first morning was theoretical – learning how to plan theory and practical lessons and the resources available to help in the task, with the afternoon given over to demonstrations of confined water tuition, drawing on the points made in the earlier lectures.

Timekeeping was excellent (a first for a BSAC course I've been on) – we were always slightly ahead of schedule. (Thanks Dave). At the end of the day, we were each assigned a 20 minute practical lesson and 10 minute theory lecture which we had to prepare overnight and deliver on day two.

Some of the trainees went out for a Chinese with the instructors – a chance to pick their brains and discuss the day's events. With hindsight, I think I should have opted for this choice as driving back and forth for early starts and late finishes was pretty knacker.

The second day was great – there were a few hangovers about, but all the lectures and pool sessions seemed to go well – despite the lack of preparation time, we were all able to deliver some decent lessons.

The afternoon was all about training in open water, expanding on our knowledge of pool training from the previous day.

So on balance, a very rewarding, if tiring, weekend – well worth taking a look at whether you are interested in training or not.

-Toby



Send me some stuff!

Please send me stories, pictures, reviews, jokes, anything at all in fact for the next thrill-packed issue of SubScript









Thanks, Toby

Kerpow! Sunstar Diary 2008

February

- 18** **OD theory and pool training**  Chris Bond
 Monday Start of OD training. Please contact Chris Bond if you can't make this session. Theory session will start at 7.15PM in the pool lecture room followed by pool training.
- 25** **OD theory and pool training**  Chris Bond
 Monday Week 2 of OD Theory and pool training.

March

- 1** **BSAC Theory Instructor Exam**  Details are on the web page (Raj Mistry)
 Saturday *Eastern Region*
 Theory exam which enables instructors to give theory lessons.
- 3** **OD theory and pool training**  Chris Bond
 Monday *Fore Street pool*
 Week 3 of OD training.
- 8 - 9** **London Dive Show**  David Parkinson
 Sat-Sun *ExCeL Centre (2 days)*
 ExCeL Centre
 01473 253430
- 10** **OD theory and pool training**  Chris Bond
 Monday Week 4 of OD training.
- 15** **BSAC Practical Rescue Management SDC**  Eastern SDCO (or Raj Mistry)
 Saturday *Eastern Region*
 A very good course for Sport divers and above who wish to learn rescue skills. This course will also count towards your dive leader grade as you progress through your training.
- 16 - 22** **Red Sea Trip**  Toby Hope
 Sun-Sat (7 days)
 Off to the warm waters of Sharm-el-Sheikh staying at the Hilton Fayrouz hotel and with 6 days of boat diving with the Red Sea College.
 07743 009414
- 24** **Bank Holiday - Easter Monday** Raj Mistry
 Monday No training today as the pool is closed.
- 29 - 30** **BSAC Boat Handling SDC**  Eastern SDCO (or Pete Young or Raj Mistry)
 Sat-Sun *Eastern Region (2 days)*
 See BSAC Eastern Region site for info and booking.
- 31** **OD theory and pool training**  Chris Bond
 Monday Week 5 (or possible week 6) of OD theory and pool training. If there are instructors available whilst the majority of the club is in the Red Sea then training will have continued prior to the bank holiday Monday.