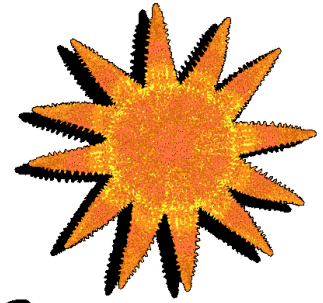


October 2008

SubScript

The Sunstar Sub Aqua Newsletter

www.sunstar.org.uk



Sunstar Sub Aqua

Welcome back!

Just basically "OOPS". I've been kinda busy. As I've now got enough content for the next two issues, I thought it about time I put finger to mouse to bring you the latest thrill-packed SubScript. In this issue we've got the usual DO stuff and 2 reports from the coal face – A nice balance of Sea Palling and the Caribbean!

Thanks for contributions – keep them coming!

Your Committee

Post	Holder
<i>Chairman</i>	John Cook
<i>Diving Officer</i>	Raj Mistry
<i>Training Officer</i>	David Parkinson
<i>Secretary</i>	Pete Young
<i>Treasurer</i>	Adrian Barker
<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

DIVING OFFICER'S DOINGS

~ Raj Mistry

Well here we are! It's October and I have to say that we have been a little remiss in doing our various write-ups. (Not to mention my cobbling them together – Ed)

Not that it's a bad thing since my excuse is that I've been busy diving and not talking about it.

We have more or less achieved my objective of doing at least one dive trip a month and I think this has allowed several newer members of the club to get in the water and have some fun which is what we're about.

In the last issue I raised the subject of how we get out to do more diving and I don't intend to go into the subject again other than to say that I believe our focus for the coming year will need to be on getting a few more people qualified to use the boat otherwise we will need to sell it (I'm referring to Calypso here). I have to say that I received no feedback to my request so either there is general apathy or everyone is happy with the trips and the use of the boat that is currently taking place.

My thanks to everyone who has organised a recent trip or participated in one. Every trip takes some organising but it's great to see the results when they do happen.

TRAINING

Ocean Diver

I have only one qualification to report. Adrian Barker completed his Ocean Diver training on the Sea Palling trip in July so well done to you. The rest of the OD candidates seem to have disappeared in to the woodwork and we will need to find out why they have not finished. I have some ideas but it will be worth finding out from them.

Sports Diver

Well done to Simon Steward for getting himself organised to go out to Gozo to get his SD qualification. He did have some help

and support from Dave Lock, David Parkinson and me, but we'll let Simon tell you all about that.

Dive Leader

Well done also to Toby Hope and most recently Chris Bond on completing their Dive Leader qualification.

SDCs

I ran an O2 SDC in July and whilst this was not the most ideal time to run an SDC (best done during the winter months) the following people have successfully completed the course:

Paul Mann
Andy Keeble
Toby Hope
Barbara Reed
Trevor Kent
Joe Cullum
Chris Nixon
Mark Smyth
Simon Steward

A special mention goes to Trevor for passing the theory exam with 100%.

My thanks go to Pete Young who very ably assisted me with running the course.

I attended a mixed gas rebreather course in August. I had an interesting and stressful first dive but am glad to say that I passed and can now do mixed gas diving. The course certainly has opened my eyes to some more things that I need to consider not only for closed circuit equipment but also for open circuit.

Well done also to Chris Bond who opted to attend the regional O2 SDC earlier this year and completed that successfully.

Progression beyond the OD qualification is up to the individual. The clubs DO or TO can only provide the means for you to progress but you have to take action, attend and help with the organisation. If there is something you'd like to do but has not been scheduled then please contact me or David.

I will be putting out dates for some courses which will include recent announcements from BSAC on new courses. I hope that you will be able to join them. These may be run in house or jointly with the region.

Club Cox

Congratulations to Alan Beaumont on completing his Club Cox qualification on the Sea Palling weekend.

BSAC Announcements

So far this year BSAC have launched a number of new SDCs/workshops. The following will be of particular interest to most divers:

- Wreck Appreciation SDC.
To introduce divers to wreck diving. An aspect of UK diving which can be second to none worldwide.
- Buoyancy workshop:
To enhance the buoyancy skills of all grades of divers
- UK Diving SDC
For existing divers who have qualified with another agency but want to experience UK diving.

Try Dives

David has already run one try dive and has a few additional dates planned (see calendar for dates) so if you have anyone who is eager or has been waiting then please let him know.

TRIPS

There were several trips organised by our club and here I have also included those where club members have joined other clubs on their trips just to show the range of diving that has occurred. No doubt I have left out some trips but this should give you an idea of the various places people have been to as these were treated as club trips.

June 2008

Swanage

A trip to Swanage organised by Toby with David, Paul and Adrian making up the expedition.

Weybourne

Divers on this trip were Toby (organiser), John, Frances, David, Adrian, Paul. The gang were joined by Trevor and Barbara on the Sunday. From the reports I had the vis was not that great so the group decided to move to Cley.

Felixstowe

Dave Lock organised our traditional outing from Felixstowe.

Divers on the trip were Dave, Ken, Karen, Bob and me. We launched and recovered from Felixstowe Ferry. Pete was unable to make it which meant Ken, Karen and I dived in one group and Dave and Bob making up the other pair. Ken and Bob were diving on twin sets, Dave was on

Ermintrude II and Karen and I were on single cylinders. If we can fit that lot on board then we can fit anything!

We had 7-8m vis on the Forth. This is the best that I can remember. Lots of nudibranchs, edible crabs, Bib (I think) and a humungous lobby (the biggest I have seen). The wreck was also covered in dense anemones in places. Ken found a lot of treasure some of which he referred to as Tat. I found a thick wad of newspaper (definitely tat) which was still readable underwater. I left it on the ship as I was sure it would disintegrate as soon as I brought it to the surface.

Dave and I had fantastic Cod and Chips at the Ferry Café in between dives whilst the others munched away on sandwiches.

We decided to try the Lord Airedale for our second dive as there was a dredger dumping stuff in the sea to the East of the shipwash. However it looked like they had been dumping stuff on our second wreck before they turned up at the shipwash as it was covered in silt resulting in only 2-3m vis. Lots of edible crabs, nudibranchs, hermit crabs, a few small lobsters and the usual fish.

Dave, Bob and I washed the boat down last thing and were away home by about 7.00PM yesterday

All in all a great day out. Thanks to Bob and Ken for preparing the boat.

Malin Head

A trip run by Cambridge BSAC club with two members of Sunstar joining them to fill the boat. A fairly good week but the weather was a bit on the rough side. Still we got two dives in every day so it wasn't all doom and gloom.

Scilly Isles

This was a week-long trip to the Scilly Isles with only Chris Hall and Aine Corrigan attending from Sunstar. It was a joint trip in association with the university club that Chris had been a member of before he moved to Ipswich.

July 2008

There was only one trip this month - an excellent excursion to Sea Palling. It was a bit of a job to organise at the last minute but the weather was too good to miss the weekend.

Sea Palling

Bob and John prepared the boat on Friday ready for a trip up to Sea Palling. Thanks

also to Alan and John for washing her down on Sunday evening. Calypso is now back in the boat hut.

Alan and I got up to the boat hut at a very early 5.30AM to hook the boat on to the minibus and leave for Sea Palling for 6.00AM. On Saturday we dived the Galatea with 6 divers in the morning (Alan, Mark, Paul, David, Adrian and me). The Galatea is an excellent dive for ODs. Visibility was around 4-5m. Paul had a prior appointment in Ipswich so left after the first dive with David. In between dives Calypso was left in the water at anchor. We dived the Conway in the afternoon. This wreck is shallow enough for ODs on low tide. Visibility was 3-4m so not as good as the morning dive but still good enough. Adrian caught his first Lobster on the second dive (with a bit of coaxing from both of us). You could feel his beaming smile underwater! See Adrian's write up of this trip elsewhere in this issue.

On Sunday we repeated the dive of the previous morning (Galatea) as we had another OD join our ranks. There were six divers on board (Ken, John, Frances, Alan, Becky and me).

We ended up assisting two boats on each day. On Saturday as we arrived at Sea Palling another dive came over requesting assistance. They had a diver with DCI symptoms and asked if we had any O2 as their cylinder had run out. I provided our O2 which they used whilst they waiting for the rescue services to arrive. The diver with the DCI symptoms and his buddy were airlifted to a decompression facility fairly quickly. One of their crew has offered to reimburse us for the used O2. The divers who were rescued also came over to thank us for our swift assistance. One of them said it made a big difference immediately to how he felt. From what I was told the incident occurred after a normal dive within limits with no unusual ascents or missed stops.

On Sunday, what looked like a charter fishing boat had engine trouble and asked us for assistance. We picked up their divers first then went over to see if we could help. The problem was eventually diagnosed as a leak in their fuel filter which they resolved with help from our boat. As a thank you they gave us (Ken) £20.00 for picking up their divers and for Ken's assistance in diagnosing the problem. We used this reward to celebrate a good weekend at the end of operations on Sunday.

Yarmouth Coast Guard also thanked us for assisting the stranded boat so not a bad end to the weekend if we helped some people as well as having three very good dives.

August 2008

A deep dive trip out of Eastbourne as organised by Chris Hall.

September 2008

John and Frances organised a trip to Ireland. Despite our best efforts to go to Little Hampton Toby ended up organising a two centre trip to West Bay and Swanage for his DL qualification. I provided this brief summary of the trip by email but here it is again in case you have not seen it.

I was only there on Sunday but from the text messages I received from Toby on Saturday to quote "mill, pond and gin" come to mind. The reference to gin related to the clarity and not the drinking. From our discussions the guys had a very good day on Saturday in Lyme Bay (diving the Baygitano and a drift) then pushed on to Swanage as Toby wasn't able to get a boat in Lyme for both days. All of the guys said that they hadn't realised how far Swanage was from Lyme Bay but they got there in time to sort out their tents and do one night dive (Matt and Paul). I left Birmingham at 5.40AM on Sunday met the guys at 9.10AM and we were ready to dive at 10.00AM. We did a couple of very exhilarating drift dives. Simon is up for a Turkey award as he has found a new way to fill his suit with sea water and a dubious way to empty it (with the help of Matt) whilst still wearing the suit! I'll let one of the guys explain the technique in a Subscript article. The skipper took a picture so hopefully people can see it for themselves. Toby should be nominated for his many experiences and varied with reels. Paul did his usual job of collecting something edible (scallops and a crab on this occasion). Matt said this was a proper blokes diving weekend! Why? We only had fried and fatty food and did what we liked doing best - diving. Note that I have edited the second part of that sentence to be politically correct. Matt introduced everyone to his song called "I like diving". Next time you see him ask him to sing you a verse or two but make sure the others aren't in ear shot.

The only wrench in the weekends proceedings was the time keeping by the skippers in Swanage which resulted in us getting in and out of the water later than

planned and back fairly late (or very early) on Monday morning. Still Toby was able to get a reduction of £10 per person because of the delays so we can't complain.

A very good weekend overall as we got out and did some more diving! However I'm not sure I'd want to do nine and a half hours driving in one day, for a while anyway!

October 2008

So far we've had a club trip to Gozo and Chris' trip to Portland as part of his Dive Leader training. Pete and I are joining a Cambridge Club trip to Plymouth (weather permitting). So look out for an article on that trip if it goes ahead.

Phew! That a lot of activity and the year's not over yet. It's great to see people getting out and diving.

Safe diving.

Raj Mistry

**A day of Firsts for Adrian Barker
~ Adrian Barker (obviously)**



Your fearless reporter investigating the Norfolk Seabed.

Saturday 26th July turned out to be a day of firsts...

Firstly (see what I did there?) there was my first visit to Sea Palling despite living about 10 miles away for the first 19 years of my life. We turned up at a fantastic beach site at 0800 on what promised to be a hot and sunny day.

Calypso arrived 15 minutes later being towed by a minibus which looked distinctly out of breath! She was parked up in the car park next to the beach and due to her size had to be left in the middle, consequently attracting a lot of attention from the 10 or so other dive clubs who had brought their smaller and sparser dive boats down as well. With her blue and white colour scheme instead of 'Rib Orange' along with her bucket seats, rear seats and the smörgåsbord of electronic trinklements mounted on the dashboard, she felt a bit Miami Vice compared to everyone else and we all re-thought our equipment for the day wondering if we'd be OK to dive in slip-on shoes, no socks and suits with the sleeves rolled up to the elbow - all except Alan of course, who's pink and blue drysuit looked Eighties enough already...



David and Paul Aboard Calypso

It was to be my first dive from a boat and Calypso really looked the business which gave me a lot of confidence and increased my excitement. Alan was being assessed for club cox so he was on the case making sure everyone got involved with boat prep and launching - his calm explanations and instructions really put me at ease as a novice as did Raj's explanations later on when we were preparing for our dive. Also on the boat on Saturday were David Parkinson, Paul Mann and Mark Smyth.

Boat prep out of the way, the tractor driver who pulled Calypso across the beach and launched her seemed to be sceptical we'd left enough time to catch the slack water on our chosen dive site, the wreck of the Galatea. Raj and Alan seemed quietly confident and looking at the size of Calypso's engine I thought we'd probably be OK!

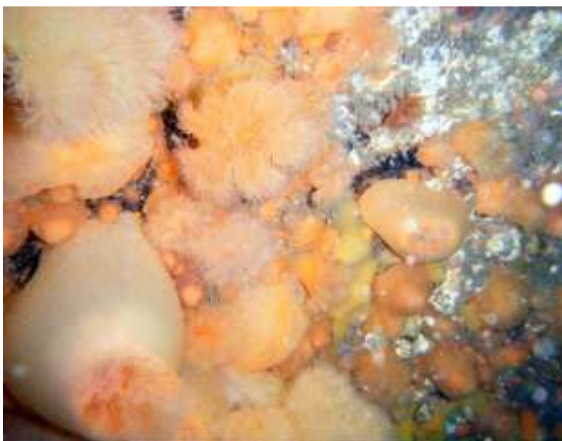


The Cambridge Crew On the wreck

12 miles offshore at 20 knots later we were proved right when we reached the wreck with the last of the tide still just about running. Cambridge BSAC were already there and greeted us warmly allowing us to use the shot line they had already put on the wreck. Mark and Alan along with David and Paul dived first leaving Raj and I as surface cover. The sea was calmer than Fore Street Baths and the sun was beating down whilst Raj and I waited for both pairs to return and went over our own dive plan. Letting others dive first and helping them back in afterwards was good experience for me and also made me aware of what I would have to be doing on my return to the boat later. Alan returned to the surface with 3 bottles of 100 year old schnapps in his catch bag which he was keen to get on board still unbroken.

With both buddy pairs recovered it was Raj and my turn to dive. We were going in more or less bang on slack water so any current was minimal and I felt quite calm about the whole thing despite being about to roll backwards off a small boat 12 miles out to sea for the first time. Once in the water and having located and swum to the marker buoy I signalled OK and we started to descend. I was a bit worried about being able to get down as I was carrying less weight than I had at my previous sea dives under Swanage Pier, but it proved to be not a problem, so the weighting tests carried out with Raj the weekend before in the Golden Bog (Gildenburgh for the uninformed) seemed to be spot on. Moving

quickly down the shot line we passed a Cambridge diver coming the other way and soon after that the top of the wreck came into view. This was a great sight - my first wreck! On previous sea dives I'd seen plenty of wildlife but I'd never encountered something as big looming out of the seabed. The Galatea is a large ship and fairly well preserved shape-wise - it was easy to make out different parts of the hull and decks with about 6m of vis. The whole wreck was covered in Plumrose anemones and Sea Orange sponges along with a few Dead Man's fingers - it looked absolutely beautiful. The barrels stored on the Galatea were scattered everywhere around the wreck along with some curious circular rings about the diameter of a lorry tyre. Swimming around the wreck taking pictures I ran into lots of crabs, both edible ones and velvet swimming crabs along with several bib and some dragonets on the seabed. We were diving at around 17m depth and although it was the deepest I'd been at that point I still felt comfortable, not cold and quite relaxed enjoying the sights of my first wreck dive. With my still abysmal air consumption it was all too soon to surface (30 minutes dive time). We came up on Raj's DSMB line after he gave me a quick demo on deployment. Experiencing no problems with my ascent I surfaced with a huge grin despite my regulator knowing my first BSAC qualification was in the bag with a great dive to boot! Getting back onto Calypso proved no problem even in my drysuit - my pool lessons came to the fore here in reminding me how to do it properly.



Plumose Anemones

Equipment stowed we were about to head inshore for lunch when one of the Schnapps bottles recovered by Alan smashed spilling its contents over Calypso's central console.

It may have been nice when bottled, but in 2008 it was one of the most putrid smells I've ever come across! Several buckets of fresh seawater later we were ready to head back in...

We used the sand anchor to moor just off the beach and lugged empty cylinders to the cars across the beach in high 20's heat, still in our drysuits, which were by that point more like damp suits inside! Raj and Alan stayed on board to lend our oxygen to another boat which had had a diver surface with DCI symptoms in his lower back. Whilst on the phone to my wife (I made a promise to ring her when safely back from each dive!) the medivac helicopter landed in the field next door to cart the guy off to the hyperbaric chamber at Gorleston's James Paget hospital. It proved to be quite hard to make the whole thing sound casual and non-life threatening to her!!! We heard later that the diver was given the all clear after a couple of sessions in the chamber and he returned on Sunday to thank the club members diving on Sunday for the help.

Low water slack was due at around 1630 that day so we set off again from the beach to dive the Conway 8 miles offshore. Some dive clubs call the wreck the Walkure - both are right; she was launched as the Conway and then re-christened when sold to German owners shortly before sinking. Cambridge had once again beaten us to the site and already had a shot line on the wreck. From the depth readings Calypso was giving us Raj was slightly concerned it may be out of my OD limits, but Alan and Mark reported a max depth on their dive of 19m so we were re-assured by that and also by doing several passes over the wreck whilst they were down. Knowing this wreck was deeper I took a torch with me this time. We descended the shot line and ended up at bang on 20m on the sea-bed - Cambridge had missed the wreck! It was darker on this dive and with slightly reduced vis we swam along for a minute or so before seeing the hull of the Conway looming out of the murk - it was another impressive sight for me. We had an initial swim around the bows of the ship and under the still intact bow-sprit. I'd left my camera on the boat this dive and was concentrating on trying to find a decent sized crab to bring back. Swimming onto the deck of the wreck I spied a large dark-blue claw protruding from under an iron beam - not a crab, but a lobster - even

better!. Raj persuaded it to scuttle backwards out of it's hiding place into my waiting hands, I caught it by the tail and held on! Raj then was treated to the sight of me with a lobster in one hand and a closed catch bag in the other with no means of getting it open! With a bit of assistance the lobster was bagged and we continued along the wreck until it was time to surface.

Back on board Calypso my lobster looked a tad disappointing compared to the 'monster' I'd caught below water, but that's refraction for you! Alan our resident fisherman pronounced it big enough to keep however and as the rest of my family are vegetarian there was plenty of meat on it for me the next day - yum!

Having got the boat out of the water and secured onto the trailer ready for towing the only thing left to do was retire to the seafront pub for a well earned beer - be that time we were all feeling distinctly 'firsty' (sorry about that one...).

This was a brilliant way to earn my OD qualification and made all the pool training and lectures worthwhile - it was quite heartening to realise the amount of knowledge from the training I'd managed to hold onto.

For all the others in my OD intake, I'd say - get out there and do it, you will not regret it - UK diving is fantastic! Sunstar has some great instructors and experienced divers whose confidence would put any novice at their ease, I couldn't think of a better day out to finish my training - roll on the next trip and those Sports Diver lectures and thanks to the instructors (Raj, David P, John, Paul M, Toby and Matt) who have got me this far and to Joe and Simon for buddy support during training dives.



Newly Qualified Ocean Diver Adrian Barker

Bonaire

By David Parkinson

When Frances suggested a trip to Bonaire it sounded great. I checked with Lesley and she also thought it was good idea. We ended up going for two weeks in late October which turned out to be a lucky choice as I ended up retiring (or at least stopping work!) at the end of September - something that wasn't planned at the time we booked.

Where is it?



For those that don't know, Bonaire is one of the ABC islands - Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao. These are Dutch and located in the (Dutch) Caribbean about 50 miles north of Venezuela. Around 50% of the people who visit Bonaire are divers. In fact Bonaire bills itself as a "Diver's Paradise" - really quite accurate as the diving is excellent and it is not highly developed for other tourism. Non-divers can just hang-out or go hiking/walking/bird watching in

the enormous Washington-Slagbaai National Park. In my view the average tourist will exhaust the island's resources in a few days.

The local currency is the Netherlands Antilles Florin (NAFL) but the US dollar is used just as much – if not more. All the restaurants we used were perfectly happy to take plastic and the transactions were in \$.

The local language is Papiamentu, and Dutch, English and Spanish are also spoken. We had no problems with only speaking English.

The island is about 24 miles long by 3-5 miles wide. About halfway down the island is the capital Kralendijk and a short distance off-shore the smaller island of Klein Bonaire. We were staying at the Buddy Dive Resort which was a mile or so north of Kralendijk. Virtually all the diving is on the sheltered west coast of the island and we were conveniently located in the middle of it – with the vast majority of the dive sites being within 20-25 minutes travelling time (or a lot less!).



Getting there

We flew out with KLM from Norwich via Amsterdam. This turned out to be an excellent way of getting there despite having a four-hour wait in Schipol on the way back (as well as returning via Aruba). Popping up to Norwich is a lot easier than getting to/from Heathrow or Gatwick. It was 40 metres from where we dropped the

car to check-in, there was no queue at the check-in and no throngs of people to fight with for the few facilities. KLM also let you take an extra bag of sports equipment (20kg max) at a cost of €20 each way – something we three divers decided to avail ourselves of. It turned out to be more of a bargain than we thought as they didn't collect the €20 on the outward leg and, forgetting that John & Frances each had an extra bag, I paid the agent just €40 for the return leg. (She didn't quibble!).

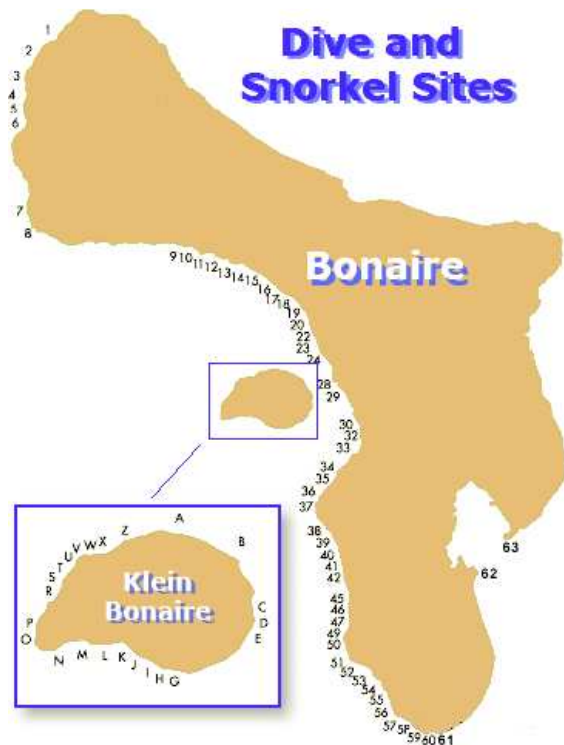
The Amsterdam/Bonaire flight time was around 9 hours.

On arrival in Bonaire we were met at the airport by somebody from the Buddy Dive Resort and bussed to the resort. We thought we'd be in a shared two bedroom apartment but we ended up in two adjoining one-bedroom apartments on the ground floor with a connecting door between them. Each apartment had a bedroom, shower room, and large kitchen/diner/sitting room area together with space to sit outside. We found the accommodation very comfortable. With the cooker and fridge/freezer available those on a tight budget could self-cater. We got our own breakfasts and lunches but ate out in the evenings.

The resort had all you'd expect – pools, bar and restaurant. On the first day we had lunch in the bar – which was made memorable by Lesley being jumped on by a very large Iguana who was after her food! Luckily – other than shock and a few scratches there were no after effects. The restaurant was a convenient place to eat after a night dive.

The diving.

Virtually all the diving is on the sheltered West coast.



Obviously to dive Kleine Bonaire you have to take a boat, but elsewhere you can do most of the dives from the shore. All the diving I did was from the shore. John & Frances did one boat dive on an afternoon when I went snorkelling with Lesley.

In order to get to the dive sites you need transport and we had hired a one of the standard pickups: Room inside for four people and plenty of space behind for the cylinders and dive gear.

All the dive sites are marked by a yellow painted rock by the side of the road which also carries the name of the site. There is some variation in ease of entry but, as someone who has dived in Gozo, I wouldn't really describe any of them as difficult although they might be to somebody who is used to just falling into the water off the back of a dive boat!



Rental jeep

The dives are broadly similar in topography and approach - you surface swim out the edge of the reef (depth ~6-9m) and then drop down and head north or south as grabs your fancy. (Once or twice there was very slight current). The reef slopes down to a sandy bottom which is usually at just over 30 metres. Towards the south it turns into a double-reef system so you have a channel between the initial drop-off and the outer reef (which peaks at ~15m). The other significant difference is the width of the shelf before the drop-off. To the north this tends to extend a shortish distance (10-20m) while the further south you get the longer surface swim (100 metres). The shelf is primarily sand, but, as we discovered, there is plenty of life in it and over it and it is a nice way to finish off the dive. The reef itself is in excellent condition and has all the usual corals and fish life that you would expect. Despite my use of "similar" above, each dive was significantly different as there was always something unique that distinguished that dive from the others.



Squid in the shallows

Whilst Bonaire is somewhere you could "dive, dive, dive...." we were more restrained and only did two dives a day, but none of our dives were less than an hour. In fact, towards the end, they were more like 90 minutes. We would turn up at a site, work out our entry, kit up, swim out to the drop off, and start our dive. All this with usually nobody else around. At the end of the dive, as we exited, we might find another two groups just about to leave the site. Whilst we had been under water they had turned up, kitted up, done their dive, got out and dekkitted. They must have missed a lot! For the dive itself it was usually a gentle pootle down the slope of the reef and then a gently rising profile to the point at which we would turn (maybe

after 40 minutes) and then back along the top. Finally it was a swim in over the sand to end the dive at 3 metres or less.

We had an "unlimited air" dive package, but after a couple of days we decided to upgrade that to "unlimited Nitrox" (32%) in the expectation that we'd feel less knackered at the end of the day. (I guess it worked).

The recipe for the day was generally: Get up, have breakfast, decide where to dive. Go to the "drive through" and load up with gear and cylinders. Drive to the dive site (usually no more than 20 minutes). Dive. Return to Buddy Dive to change cylinders and have lunch in front of our rooms. Decide where to dive in the afternoon. Go and dive. Return, clean up, write up log book and look at photos. Drink beer (if not driving). Decide where to eat. Go and eat. Go to bed. Repeat next day.

The dives

On the first day we started out on the Dive Centre's house reef. This is a mandatory "check out" dive which everyone has to do. However you are left to do it by yourself. The idea is that it lets you check that everything works and that your weighting is correct before you get let loose on the other dive sites. Having followed a line out from the dock to the drop-off you have the option of turning north or south. To the north you can reach the wreck of an old fishing boat.



Top of the reef

To the south it is just the coral reef but they have marked out a few corals of note. The thing that struck me on the first dive was the clarity of the water. I don't know if this was just the contrast with the UK!

All of the dives were very enjoyable. Here are a selection of comments from the 24 dives I did. All (bar one) had beautiful

corals and the usual standard wildlife – moray eels, parrot fish, angelfish, cleaner shrimps, blue tangs, trumpet fish – to name but a few.

We did two night dives - both times on Buddy House Reef. Each time we were joined by two large tarpon who stayed with us for most of the dive. Frances found an octopus at the end of the second dive.

There is one real wreck dive - the Hilma Hooker. This is a 1,000ton 71.8m Cargo ship that was seized by the authorities after 25,000lbs of marijuana were found on it. There were plans to sink it as a dive site but this idea was apparently scuppered as it was evidence and might have to be returned by the Netherlands Antilles Attorney General should the owners be found to be innocent. However the ship was in a poor condition and the authorities were reluctant to have it moored up at the pier and so the decision was made to move it to a permanent mooring. Owing to a great deal of foresight within both the government and the Bonaire Tourist Bureau, a meeting was called so the dive operators could suggest an anchorage that, in the event the ship should sink, it would be safe for navigation and cause the least amount of coral damage.



After many months of being tied to the pier and pumped of water, on September 7, 1984 the Hooker was towed to an anchorage. As the days passed, a slight list became noticeable. The list was even more obvious one morning. The owner was still not coming forward to claim the ship and maintain it so the many leaks added up until on the morning of September 12, 1984 the Hilma Hooker rolled over onto her starboard side and sank. She lies in about 30m on her starboard side.

We dived it twice. The first time was in the morning and there were other divers around. The second time we timed it for

early afternoon. This got us the wreck to ourselves, and, with the sun high in the sky, good illumination down at 30 metres. I also thought the viz was much better on that dive. On the previous one there was more suspended matter thanks to divers finning over the sand and around the wreck - only really noticeable if you are trying to take pictures rather than just swimming around. At the end of the dive Frances pointed out two large Tarpon that were lurking under the wreck. As with all the dives you end up back on the top of the reef so deco isn't really an issue if you spend time at depth. However the depth of the wreck meant that this was one of our shorter dives at 68 minutes.

Front Porch: The wreck of a small tug boat not far from Buddy Dive. At the start it didn't look as if this was going to be a particularly good/long dive, as, other than the small wreck, there was not much in the way of fish life or corals, but as we were poking around the tug a turtle turned up.



Then, as we made our way back up the slope there turned out to be a wealth small critters to be found in the broken coral.

There are a couple of piers in Bonaire – the Oil pier and the Town pier. As these are working piers you cannot dive them without permission and a guide. We decided to dive the Oil pier – the handy thing about the local guide was that he knew where to find the frogfish! (We saw two).

Angel City: Frances found a tiny filefish in the coral. Six squid in a line in the shallows at the end of the dive.

Margate Bay: "Bait ball" being harassed by Jacks – we couldn't tear John away! More small filefish.



Jeannie's Glory: On the way out we spotted an Eagle Ray feeding in the sand which entertained us for a while. Beautiful corals (as always). Large shoal of Blue Tangs with three Trumpet Fish trying to blend in and use them as cover. Turtle turned up at the end.

One day we decided to head north and try some of the dive sites in the National Park. Unfortunately, due to recent weather, we could not take the northern-most route through the park. (All the roads are dirt tracks). The two dives we did do were nothing special, and, I subsequently discovered, the Collision Damage Waiver insurance we had taken out does not apply if you take the vehicle on un-metalled roads. (ie We would have had to have covered the full cost of any damage to the vehicle). So maybe next time we'll give the park a miss?



Lesley adds: The snorkelling in front of Buddy Dive is very good and access is easy – as was the snorkelling at the Andrea 1 dive site. I could sit by the pool and read all day. As a non-diver I would say this is a great place to go if, like me, you like to "do nothing", and I'm looking forward already to going again next year.

Costs were of the order of £1500 for a diver and £1350 for a non-diver with food on top. We self-catered breakfast and lunch. The evening meal was in the range \$100-\$150 for the four of us depending on our choice of restaurant.

We enjoyed it so much that we're planning a return visit in 2009. You may already have seen an email about it with up-to-date costs. Sign-up now, put it in your calendar and start saving! One week or two - the choice is yours.

Whallop! Sunstar Diary 2008

October

- 25 - **Cambridge Club trip on Loyal Watcher**   Raj
26 *Plymouth* (2 days)
Sunstar taking a couple of spaces with Cambridge Club on a trip with Loyal Watcher. There were 4 spare spaces but all are now taken. Suzie is aiming to dive Hand Deeps and Hat Rock. Possibility of also doing a couple of wreck dives (the Percier, the Maine, the Oregon or the Rosehill).

November

- 1 - 2 **Dive Show - NEC** Raj
Sat- *NEC* (2 days)
Sun Another chance to visit the dive show at the Birmingham NEC.

20	AGM <i>Crucible Theatre, Adastral Park</i> Your opportunity to say goodbye to the outgoing committee and welcome (or join!) the new one.	Pete Young 01473 625584
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The Eagle-Eyed among you will have noticed that the Sunstar AGM is coming up!

We need as many of you to attend as possible – It's crucial to the running of the club and it's always better to get a good cross section of opinion when deciding matters for the coming year.

Why not come and have a go on the committee – Organise the club, Run trips, Drink coffee. It's really good fun, plus the club wouldn't exist without the time and efforts given up freely by the various committee officers.

Coming up next time in SubScript:

- Plumbing the shallows of Monterrey Bay
- Simon and the dread tale of the missing dry suit inflation valve
- SCALLOPS, SCALLOPS, SCALLOPS;
- Chris Bond tries his hand at Shark Wrangling in Africa and lives to tell the tale. (hopefully)
- and probably more - If any of you write anything and email it to me here: toby.hope@2cs.com.