

SUBSCRIPT

The newsletter of the BT Research Sub Aqua Club, July 1996 issue.

Diving the Cod Hole and the Coral Sea

Pete Young

This is the final stage of my Australian trip and the best diving has been saved until last - a 5-day liveaboard sailing out up the barrier reef and out into the Coral Sea. Taka 3 is a former beam trawler with accommodation for 24 divers and 10 crew. Friday night is spent getting gear ready, having a briefing and being introduced to my buddy. This was the moment I was dreading : "Pete, you're diving with Norbert from Germany, 7 foot tall, 18 stone, lives entirely on garlic and beer and uses 400l/minute". Instead, I am delighted to meet Yumi, a BSAC sport diver from Japan with 180 dives including 4 trips to Truk Lagoon, and, as I would soon discover, unbelievable buoyancy control skills.

Next morning, our first dive from Taka 3 at the Cod Hole. We swim under the boat, following the slope to get our depth. All of a sudden it starts raining weightbelts. I'm just about to be public spirited and pick one up when I see another one coming down, and realise that the PADI types must be doing a search and recovery session. That's the last time I help out the DMs! Coming back up the slope, everyone else turns left so I turn right and we are rewarded by swimming right into the midst of a shoal of Chevron Barracuda.

Part of the total tourist experience is to feed the large Potato Groupers, or Potato Cod as they are known locally, which are common at this site. Or rather, a divemaster sits on a rock and feeds the cod while the tourists take it in turn to hover next to him and have their photos taken. The object of the exercise is really to sell as many of these photos back to the tourists at extortionate prices. Despite finding this rather tedious, we wait around until it is our turn. The proceedings are enlivened by one large cod who decides to eschew the proffered bait and swallows a large red-mouthed bass

instead, and by the giant Moray Eels under the rock which are clearly disappointed that they haven't been invited to lunch. Finally it is our turn: as Yumi hovers, perfectly neutrally buoyant, the DM falls off the rock and has to be hauled back into position.

We round off the day with a night dive, a most enjoyable experience. There is much more life than I have observed on my previous night dives in the Red Sea and we discover shrimps, hermit crabs, lion fish and a small moray.

After a somewhat lumpy night in 3-4m seas, much to the chagrin of some of the punters, we awoke bright and early to find ourselves anchored on the North Horn of Osprey Reef, some 100 miles due East of Lizard Island in the Coral Sea. Taka 3 is the only boat which visits Osprey Reef regularly, and as soon as we got in the water the sharks were waiting for us, expecting to be fed.

Osprey Reef is a near-vertical pillar of granite which stands up in 1000m of water. This is one of the most spectacular wall dives I've ever seen, even without the constant accompaniment of Grey and White Tip reef sharks cruising along on the edge of visibility, 25m or so.

Feeding the sharks is also laid on as part of the tourist experience. The tourists sit in a semi-circle around the edges of a natural amphitheatre in the coral. The divemasters attach a wire rope on a buoy to a large coral bommie in the middle of the semi-circle. Another divemaster in one of Taka's tenders attaches a clump of Tuna heads and tails to the wire (after about 5 attempts to pick up the buoy!), and it starts to sink down to the

bottom under it's own weight. It never gets there: the sharks rip it to shreds in a most impressive manner in around 2 minutes.

Returning overnight to the ribbon reefs is almost an anticlimax. The visibility is certainly worse than on Osprey reef, possibly as bad as 12m! We still have plenty of opportunity to watch out for unusual fish behaviour, which includes a trumpet fish shadow-stalking: swimming along looking over the shoulder of another fish to try and conceal itself from its intended prey.

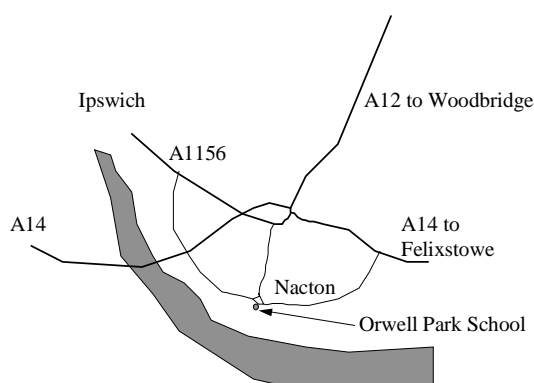
The rest of the trip is spent working our way down towards Cairns along the ribbon reefs, winding up with two dives on the outer reef on the last day. A 6am start ensures that no-one goes mad with the tinnies the night before. The atmosphere on the dive deck that morning is tense, it's as though no-one wants to bring the end of the trip about. Near the end of a second and last dive we encounter a shoal of glass fish on the reef. A great barracuda swims by and the shoal goes frantic, twisting and writhing like a spectre. Yumi is above me , silhouetted against this animated backdrop by the bright sunlight. A great end to a great trip on what must be one of the top sites in the world.

Dave Lock on Taurus



BBQ SWIM AND OBSERVATORY TOUR

AT ORWELL PARK SCHOOL
NACTON, IPSWICH



on Sunday 18th August 1996

from 5 pm till 8.30 pm ---swim and BBQ

8.30 pm onwards ---observatory tour and heavenly bodies

Bring own refreshments and food for the BBQ

(Charcoal supplied)

Price £2-00 per adult

Free for under 15's

Tickets from FrancEs Cook 01473 711122
John Cook 01473 642084

DO DOINGS

Pete Young



Welcome to this edition of the newsletter and DO Doings. The last couple of months have seen many of the winter's trainees complete their pool training and open water qualifying dives, and we are ready to embark on the summer's sport diver programme. Other people are also making good progress towards Dive Leader and Advanced Diver. I'd like to thank Dave Lock for all his hard work in organising various skill development courses over the spring period.

I'd also like to thank Roy Lobbett for setting up the sessions at Broomhill Pool in Ipswich. All branch members are welcome to go along between 7.00 and 8.45 pm during the summer for no charge, other than spending a few minutes at the start of the session clearing up some of the detritus from the pool. I'd like to encourage everyone to make use of this valuable resource (the pool, not the detritus!).

Word has reached my ears of some developments in the field of electronic navigation aids for divers. Needless to say this equipment has been developed in the USA. I'm not referring to the US Navy's underwater GPS system, which costs a cool \$10,000. More reasonably priced at \$500 is a system called the Dive-Trak, which will be invaluable for those who haven't mastered the use of a £30 reel to return to an anchor line. Dive-Trak consists of a sonar transmitter and receiver: you put the transmitter wherever you want to return to, and use the receiver to home in on the signal. Another \$500 buys

you increased range and a second transmitter you can attach to your buddy.

If this isn't sufficient, you could splash out on the DiveTracker, which is a mixed gas dive computer, communications system and 3-D sonar transmitter/receiver all rolled into one. This clever box of tricks will track divers to within 6 inches of their position, allows the position of underwater objects to be mapped, and can be connected to a GPS to give Lat and Long measurements. All this for a mere \$6000. A bargain!

This equipment should come as a boon for those of us who are "locationally challenged", though be warned that I will take a dim view of anyone who attempts to use anything other than a compass for the Sport Diver navigation drill.

Closer to home, the visibility off Felixstowe has finally improved to the point where it is possible to enjoy diving. Low water tides have consistently given us 3-4 m vis on the Arethusa. Time to get out there and get wet. Just remember the old saying: Plan the dive, dive the wreck, wreck the plan!

SOCIAL NEWS

Frances Cook

If you are wondering what's happening this summer here is a date to put in your diary.

This summer's main event will be a BBQ swim and observatory tour at the Orwell Park School in Nacton. It will be held on Sunday 18th of August from 5 pm onwards. From approximately 8:30 pm we will be given a guided tour of the school's observatory by two of our members, Roy Lobbett and Peter Richards, who incidentally are also members of the Astronomical Society. We hope the sky is clear to allow us to focus on heavenly bodies (no not that sort!) with the telescope. As to which heavenly bodies to look at I have left it to the two experts.

This is a great day out and all are welcome. Invite your relatives, friends and neighbours along. All you have to do is bring your own drinks and food to cook on the barbecue. Whilst the food is cooking why not have a swim in the school's pool and work up an appetite.

Tickets for this event are priced at £2-00 per adult but are free for children under 15. Half of the entrance fee

goes to the school and the other half, after expenses, will be divided between BTRSAC and the Astronomical Society. To get your tickets please come down to Fore St on Monday Club nights or contact me FrancEs Cook or John Cook.

I hope to see many of you there, particularly new members, as well as those who aren't regular attendees at Fore St. This is a great opportunity to get to know members and their families. Don't forget to put this date in your diary and DO COME.

Picture of Ken Gould in his normal state on Taurus



Picture of Simon Keating with bell of Ville de Bordeaux



CLUB LOGO GARMENTS

Frances Cook

I'm pleased to say that one third of club members have already got a club logo garment. Several non-members are also in possession of these garments, which is great!

If you haven't got one yet why not make an order soon. Even if you have bought one you can still order more. There are so many types of garments to choose from and in various sizes and colours. You can even choose the colours of the logo. In fact that is the difficulty when it comes to selecting garments - there's too much choice. Don't forget to add £1 to the listed price in the catalogue. This is so we can recoup the tooling charge for the club logo design.

If you are interested in ordering garments please come down to Monday Club nights at Fore St where you can either find me or John Cook with the catalogue books. You'll often find some examples on members. John or I will be taking your orders so look forward to seeing you.

FrancEs.

TRAINING CORNER

Mick Morley

Organising Try-Dives

Introduction

One of the most enjoyable and fulfilling activities (other than illegal, fattening or sexual) for an experienced diver is to introduce someone new to the sport. It is a natural reaction for most of us to offer try-dives to our friends and colleagues and it is essential for the club to continue to attract new members. The first dive using SCUBA however must be safe, and should be challenging, exciting and particularly fun. This does not happen by chance and try-dives need to be carefully thought through and sensitively run. Since affiliating to BSAC the club has organised several try-dive events and we have learned some valuable lessons.

Roy Lobbett and I have been giving some thought to this and we have outlined some points below which should help ensure that everyone's objectives are met.

Approaches

If a club member would like someone to experience a try-dive with the club, one of three basic approaches can be adopted:

1. add their name to the waiting list for the next try-dive event to be run by the club;
2. ask one of the club instructors to organise a suitable event;
3. organise an event themselves.

Basic Rules

- For consistency and to ensure that nothing important is missed, all try-dives should follow the process described in the BSAC Instructor's Manual - including both theory and practical sessions.
- A BSAC nationally qualified Instructor should approve and oversee the arrangements and be responsible for safety aspects of the event.
- The practical instruction in the pool should be given on a one-to-one basis by divers qualified to at least Dive Leader or Sports Diver who has attended a BSAC Instructor course.

Fees

The normal charge for a try-dive is **£10 per person**. This charge can be reduced to £6 if club equipment is not used and to £4 if the instructor is willing to forego his/her air/equipment costs.

This should be collected from the participant before or on the day by the event organiser and paid to the club treasurer.

Bits & Pieces

The following check-list and contacts should help event organisers ensure that major elements are covered.

Activity	Contact	
Check date and spaces on next planned try-dive	Assistant TO	
Coordinate with existing training programme	TO	
Discuss with instructor from qualified instructor list	TO	
Obtain lecture and pool section material	TO	
Obtain handouts and forms	Secretary	
Distribute club intro leaflet and disclaimer prior to event	Secretary	
Arrange club equipment	Equipment Officer	
Arrange basic equipment	Beg from members	
Ensure BSAC disclaimer form signed prior to pool	Secretary	
Return signed forms (disclaimer and new member info)	Secretary	

DIARY DATES

Subscript deadline

6 September 1996.

Early submission of articles appreciated. Well, any articles at all would be nice.
Editor reserves the right to correct spelling mistakes.

Events, courses and holidays

Date	Event	Contact
19 July 1996	Devon, shore-based holiday	Dave Tonge
12 August 1996	S&S session	John Cook
19 August 1996	S&S session	John Cook
2 September 1996	S&S session	John Cook
30 September 1996	Novice training starts	
5 October	Barn Dance 6:30 til late	Frances Cook
7 December 1996	Christmas meal 7:30 for 8:00	Frances Cook

Committee Meetings

5 August 1996, 7:00, Lord Nelson.

Newsletter produced by Suzanne Sheppard.