

SUBSCRIPT

The newsletter of the BT Research Sub-Aqua Club, January 1999



Red Sea, November 98

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Further information:

Web pages

From inside BT:

<http://webserver.bt-sys.bt.co.uk/http/docs/BTRSAC/>

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<http://www.geocities.com/Colosseum/2473/>

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To make sure you have access to all the information which is passed around, send a mail to majordomo@srd.bt.co.uk with the following content:
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Mail can be sent to the list which will then be forwarded onto all members, the address for this is **bt-diving@srd.bt.co.uk**

Remember also that you can find more information about the club on our website at
<http://webserver.bt-sys.bt.co.uk/httpd/docs/BTRSAC/>
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The newsletter editor will send a notice to the mailing list when a new newsletter has been published.

Don't worry if you haven't got Internet and email access - you will be sent a paper copy of *Subscribe* and the ad-line (Tel. 01473 644474) is updated regularly with the latest diving and club information.

Editor's bit

Phil Sheppard



Several keen new committee members have provided articles for this first issue of *Subscribe* for the new year - we'll see how long the enthusiasm lasts but meanwhile a good start - well done! With all these contributions plus two excellent holiday articles this is yet another

rather large edition of *Subscribe* - but no worries, you don't have to read it all in one go.

Mick's Muses

(Chairman's Corner)

Mick Morley

Hi, I am the new club Chairman and this column will be the first of, I hope, regular contributions to the newsletter outlining the major issues and changes which the committee are facing and resolving.

I have a sneaking feeling that over the next two or three years we will see some significant changes to the way diving is organised in the UK, the priorities and shape of BT as a company and the way we have to run our club. The committee will be considering these changes over the next few months and we will keep you briefed on developments. I make no apologies if at times it sounds as if we are approaching this like running a business rather than a club. Of course it is important to keep the right balance, but I believe that this is the best way of delivering the greatest value from all of our contributions, both financial and time.

At the club's AGM in November major changes occurred in the make-up of your committee, as I have outlined further down this column. On page X you will find the names and photographs of those members who now are serving as committee officers and committee members. I hope that this will become a regular feature of the newsletter so that we can be easily spotted and contacted by any member of the club.

Members of the committee give up a lot of their own time to help manage the club in the best interests of all its members. If you feel that we are not achieving this in any way, however small, *please tell us*.

Whilst chatting to some of the Club Diver trainees before Christmas I was made aware that some of the membership paperwork was still outstanding, resulting in new members not yet having full BSAC membership. After speaking with Jonathan, Paul and Daren it appears that this may have been caused by some misunderstandings about when, how, where and to whom to submit medical certificates prior to training. Paul and Jon have proposed a way to make sure that no-one is disadvantaged as a result of this and we will be working on how the new members procedure can be improved. Thanks to those who pointed out the problem - now we can do something about it.

We had a very enjoyable evening at Branagan's for the club's Christmas dinner, thanks to considerable efforts from Dave Garrat. I would have liked to have seen more people there, in particular the newer members. The social events of the club are *vital* in bringing members and their families and friends together, but they cannot work if there is not a willingness to participate. Dave and others will be putting a social programme together for this year and wants *you* to tell him what sort of events you enjoy. Please support him with suggestions and by putting the dates in your diaries and attending whenever you can.

BSAC are continuing with their overhaul of the diver training programme with the latest proposals impacting

Dive Leaders, Instructors and Advanced Divers. See Raj's article on page Y to understand how it could affect you and how you can take part in shaping those proposals.

We have received a copy of the BSAC 1998 Diving Incidents Report which outlines and analyses details of UK diving incidents occurring to divers of all affiliations plus incidents occurring world-wide involving BSAC members. Valuable lessons for us are described by Andy on page Z.

Committee Changes

Dave Lock stood down as Chairman after a planned one year period. Dave introduced a number of improvements to the way the committee is run, despite increasing pressure from work taking him abroad for long periods. Dave's wider BSAC responsibilities and work commitments will be taking even more of his time over the coming months.

Jonathan LS did a magnificent job as Secretary and stand-in Chairman covering all of his normal "duties" and keeping things moving during the periods of Dave's absence.

Peter Young stood down as Diving Officer after a full three years of holding this demanding and critical post for the club. Andy Saunders has taken over and, I am sure, will be putting his own stamp on the organisation of expeditions, safety aspects, diver development and all other diving related activities of the club.

John Cook completed two magnificent years as Training Officer and has been replaced by Raj Mistry who has been John's assistant over this period. Raj will be continuing with the very successful improvements the training team has introduced, in areas such as open water training, recruitment, skills development, etc and has his own ideas on how to improve other areas.

Andy Saunders' previous role as Equipment Officer has been taken on by Robert Spray. This particular development gives me considerable pleasure in that Rob has not been in the club as long as many other members but, with Dawn, has taken a very keen interest in the running of the club. This is very welcome and a great encouragement to all new and longer-term members. The Equipment Officer's role involves a lot of co-ordination and control of equipment availability, maintenance, replacement, etc and Andy has done a fantastic job over the last three years. Which makes his willingness to take on the even more demanding role of Diving Officer, without taking any time off between posts, even more impressive!

This equally goes for Daren Wood who, following three very successful years as club Treasurer, has now taken over the role of Boat Officer from Barry Manning. Barry and Bob Brett his Assistant Boat Officer have done an excellent job, putting in many hours of work at the boat hut. This role depends very heavily on the efforts of other club members however, and Daren plus Steve Webb the ABO will need the full support of *all* other members of the club when called upon to volunteer. The club's boats are our most valuable asset. Without many hours of voluntary maintenance by club members we would not be able to support these in the way we do currently and membership costs would be much higher. *It is NOT the job of the Boat Team to do all the work!*

Paul Beaumont, another relatively new member of the club, has kindly volunteered to take on the vitally important role of Treasurer. Like Rob Spray, the involvement of a new member in committee activities is very welcome in that Paul will bring new ideas and new ways of looking at the ways things are done.

Kate Potter has completed her term as New Members' Rep, very ably ensuring that the committee has an accurate view of how new members feel about the way they are settling into the club. David Brett has agreed to take on this important role, which the AGM decided should have a change of holder every two years to ensure that the views do not become too "institutionalised". I will be asking David to be actively involved in helping to identify any changes which may be needed to the recruitment and welcoming process. If anyone, in particular new members, have suggestions on this please let David have them.

Another change agreed at the AGM was to extend the remit of the newsletter editor to encompass the wider considerations of all communications within and outside the club. Phil Sheppard has taken on this wider role and will head a "CommsTeam" with Tim Stevens looking after the WWW pages, Paul Brannan continuing his excellent work with the ad-line (please) and other members to be identified to help maintain notice boards, contact media, work with other clubs, etc

OK, for those who have reached this far, *thank you*. Future columns should not be this long. Now make a New Year's resolution to have at least ten more dives than you did last year - and *have a brilliant year*.

MickM

Training Talk

Raj Mistry, Training Officer



Welcome to the first article on training. For those of you who don't know me my name is Raj Mistry and as Mick indicated in his article I have taken over as Training Officer. In this article I will be covering the changes being proposed by the BSAC regarding diver and instructor training and some initial dates for this years training programme.

Over the past few years the BSAC has been involved in a process of modernisation ensuring that it remains competitive with other diving organisation in the facilities, training and benefits it provides to it's members. These changes have been developed within the BSAC and involve a consultation period with the membership. This should enable everyone to be involved and to influence the changes being proposed. If you haven't done so already then have a look at the BSAC web site (at <http://www.bsac.com/>) for these discussions and have your say. I should point out that other than the Ocean/Club/Sport Diver changes that have already been adopted the remaining changes described here are still only proposals.

BSAC proposals on Diver Training

As far as training is concerned the BSAC is re-vamping its current diver and instructor training programmes. Changes to Diver training has already seen the introduction of Ocean Diver at resorts/schools and the Club Diver grade within the clubs. These grades essentially replace the Novice I and II grades. Trainees who qualify as Club Diver can dive to 20m and can dive with other divers of the same grade. This is at an earlier stage than was allowed under the old programme. It is however down to club DO and Marshals to decide whether individuals have gained sufficient experience to dive together. At the same time the Sport Diver grade was modified to allow dives to 35m and to include decompression dives. Individuals are expected to progress to deeper diving progressively and there is no requirement to dive deeper.

Anyone in the club who has completed Novice training under the old scheme but has not yet achieved the Sport Diver grade has until April of this year to complete their training. After that time they will have to re-do their training under the new programme. Members of the club who qualified as SDs under the old scheme will be given the extra training needed to plan and execute

decompression dives. These changes have already been adopted.

We now come to the current proposals, those related to the Dive Leader and the Advanced Diver grade. The BSAC has indicated that it intends to remove the Dive Leader grade and replace it with a one-day Dive Leader course run by the branch. This course will not involve any assessment. In addition it is proposed that the ability to lead trainees should now be confined to qualified instructors, which is in line with other diving organisations. The intention is to allow Sport Divers to begin qualifying for Advanced Diver at an earlier stage in their training. One result of this is that we will need to have more qualified instructors to ensure that our existing instructors are not over loaded. Existing Dive Leaders will retain their grade and can progress to Advanced Diver/Instructor level under the new programme if they wish.

The Advanced Diver grade has already been modified (in 1995) to make it a modular course but has been slightly re-structured to take account of the transition from Sports Diver and to include new skills. The mandatory courses for Advanced Diver are:

- Dive Leadership
- O² Administration
- Practical Rescue Management
- Dive Planning and Marshalling

In addition to these the diver or branch may choose two more from the following list

- Practical Diving Techniques (was Advanced Diving Techniques)
- Search & Recovery
- Boat Handling
- Chartwork and Position Fixing
- Advanced Nitrox
- First Aid for Divers

New Advanced Divers will be equivalent to Advanced Divers who qualified under the old programme.

There is a mandatory requirement of 20 dives between Sport Diver and the Dive Leader course and a further 20 dives before Advanced Diver can be awarded.

It is proposed that these changes are introduced in March 1999 with a transition period which ends in April 2000.

BSAC Proposals for Instructor Training

In his presentation, Bob Boler, the BSAC Diving Officer said that this is the first major review of the Instructor Training Scheme (ITS) since its introduction over 30 years ago. There have been some amendments such as the introduction of the Open Water Instructor grade recently but this is the first complete review.

In summary the BSAC proposes to introduce 2 grades of Nationally Qualified Instructors (Level 1 and 2), a route to becoming an Instructor Trainer and finally National Instructor. Note that the BSAC has concentrated on the content for these grades. The names are likely to change once the consultation period on the content is complete. I intend to only cover the NQI Level 1 changes in this article. Full details of these changes can be found at

<http://www.bsac.com/news/uww98/dtpits.htm>

The following diagram summarises the grades and stages for the NQI Level 1 instructor:

Sports Diver	Entry requirement for NQI Level 1
Pool Assistant	Attendance on pool and or classroom teaching courses.
Classroom Assistant	Can teach in pool and or classroom on completion
OWI Assistant	Must have attended pool teaching and Dive Leader courses On completion of OWI Course and assessment can teach in open water under NQI Level 1 supervision
Theory Exam	One hour multiple choice questions of knowledge up to Dive Leader course Pool and NQI Level 1 exam covering classroom and pool lesson Classroom Exam
NQI Level 1 Instructor	Can teach Club, Ocean, Sports and Dive Leader courses

By splitting the existing training it is hoped that individuals can begin training in the branch sooner than under the old programme. The proposal is to introduce the new Instructor courses in January 2000 with one year for transition. There is a possibility of introducing the pool and classroom teaching course in autumn of 1999.

Exiting instructors who have already attained the OWI grade and are Dive Leaders (or above) will be transferred to the NQI Level 1 grade.

Training Programme

By the time this issue of subscript is published some of the earlier events in my list will have already taken place or will be in progress. Please note that is a draft

programme and some of the dates later in the year are likely to change.

Life Saver Award	- 11 Jan to 1 Mar
Try Dive 1	- 25 Jan
Try Dive 2	- 1 Feb
1999 Intake 1 pool	- 8 Mar to 24 May
1998 Intake 2 open water/SD weekends	- Start midllate Apr on weekends
1999 Intake 1 open water/SD weekends	- Start Jun on weekends
Try Dive 3	- 21 Jun
Try Dive 4	- 28 Jun
1999 Intake 2 pool	- 02 Aug to 11 Oct
1999 Intake 2 open water/SD	- Oct
Pool available for SDC's/Skills practice/swimming –	Nov to Dec

Please note that there is no Octopush on try dive evenings and it will not be possible to use the pool for scuba training whilst the Life Saver SDC is being taught.

Octopush

Tracey Skirrow

You may have noticed the frantic splashing that has been going on in the pool while you have been getting kitted up for training, this is a game called octopush, and is basically underwater hockey. If any of you would like to join in, then you are more than welcome. Octopush is guaranteed to get you fit and to improve your finning and duck-diving techniques. If there is enough interest from new people we will run a practice session to give newbies a chance to get to grips with it. All you need is a mask, snorkel and fins and a protective glove if you have one.

Octopush is played most weeks from 8.20pm until 8.50pm (although we probably won't be playing for the next couple of weeks because of the try dives).

The DO's *thingies*

Andy Saunders, Diving Officer

Welcome to the first of what I hope will be a regular update on our clubs diving, this one is a bit protracted but I will soon tire of typing.

Where do we want to go?

I need feedback from you - where do **you** want to go? Give me some ideas and don't forget the families, if they enjoy the day you get to go diving again!

Here are some places we have been before: -

<u>Local</u>	<u>Deeper</u>	<u>Trips</u>	<u>Hols</u>
Norfolk-not just Weybourne!	Southwold 30mt+	Swanage	Oban
Happisburgh	Eastbourne	Weymouth	Cornwall
Bacton			Pembroke
Cley			St kippis
River drift dive			Hebrides
Night dive			Scapa flow
			Farne's
			Devon
			mull

Who's safe to take us there?

Our dive marshals have spent considerable time and effort training to safely take you diving and to keep their skills tiptop, they need to take you out regularly!

BUT... we only have a few of them, make their lives easier by offering assistance where your skills will allow e.g. filling in the log sheets, sorting out the costs and/or collecting monies due, boat transporting, washing boat down and last but by far not least phoning around and getting the framework of an event going.... Who knows you may be so useful that marshals will give

preferential diving opportunities!

Enough waffling, just ask these people to take you diving: -

Brian Babbs

Paul Brannan -soon!

John Cook

Ken Gould

Simon Keating

Dave Lock -Dave wants to try his new landrover out

Raj Mistry

Mick Morley

Tim Stevens

Steve Webb

Daren Wood

Pete Young

Oh well me too, I don't think the rest will let me off after this list.

Diving Itinerary 1999

This started of as a sort of timeline to help me arrange diving, instead it ended up having everything else but diving! But useful all the same. I hope to get some of the holes filled in soon to help make it a bit more useful. I have put the up to date copy on my home page at

www.heathe.demon.co.uk/diving

If something is missing why not download it, change the text and email it back, then I can upload to my site so it's as up to date as possible and ready for the next subscript.

Dive Fitness

Paul Skirrow has asked me to mention Octopush, a fine way to build up your dive fitness! [*Second mention this issue - do you get the idea that Paul and Tracey are a bit keen on Octopush? - Ed*]
Octopush is on most weeks (see list) and Paul noted that we are allowed in to change **at 8-20pm** and in the water for 8-30pm, so full use of the 20 minutes to 8-50pm can be had.

Also, everyone is welcome to have a go, but hats must be worn.

Paul has a few spare hats he can loan for awhile (up to say 5 weeks) but if you get bitten by the sport you will need your own, which Paul can supply for £9-50.

Dive Leader Changes

BASC are proposing a radical change in the training of divers wishing to progress up from sport diver. The grade of dive leader is to be abolished with the club being able to award this up to April 2000

Existing dive leaders can keep their grade as such and will also be awarded an SDC equivalent, called dive leadership but will lose the ability to "take novices in "for fun or training as this is to be the province of open water instructors only.

My advice is that if you are part way towards DL contact me and finish it this spring / summer, Pete Young and John Cook have kindly offered to do this training.

If you are thinking of starting from scratch then it *may* be better to do the new 1 day dive leadership branch run SDC when they become available but you will certainly **learn more** on the old DL course.

The SDC counts towards advanced diver as explained in Raj's training talk.

Further details may be found on BSAC's website www.bsac.com/news/uww98/dtpits.htm

If you do not have Internet access just ask and I will provide a printed copy (6 pages) no problem. If you don't like what you see, write or email to Bob Boler at BSAC before it's too late as the above is not yet fixed.

DL's wishing to take a part in training should speak to Raj or me, as there are still parts that DL's can do to help and we will be as flexible as BSAC will allow!

Diving Incidents

In life, all pleasurable things seem to have a down side and diving is no exception, non-divers view it as dangerous, insurance companies as a possible claim or is it additional profit as they up your premium?

Because diving is relatively safe as long as you dive: -

Well within your experience and slowly build up your diving

Look after your dive kit, think of it as life support equipment

Dive the buddy system, check your buddies air regularly, he's carrying **your** spare air!

Each year we receive from BASC the Diving Incidents report, at first it looks frightening..431 incidents, 22 UK fatalities, real newspaper headline stuff - until you start to look deeper.... And get it in perspective.

Of the 22, 6 were members of BSAC - FACT - Clubs encourage safer diving practices and BSAC have 46,700 members, that's not a bad ratio but less would be better of course!

5 were diving alone or deliberately separating, one of which went back down to recover the anchor.
5 were diving to more than 50m (57m on air-75m and 85m on trimix)

3 were using rebreathers

1 re-entered to recompress after missed stops

3 had major heart attacks whilst diving

1 just 1 instructor to 4 trainees on a wreck at 30m

1 panicked on his 5th ever dive, this one was to 35m

1 pr of divers of 5 non UK dives experience on 1st UK dive at 18m indicated to his buddy that he was out of air

2 unknown

Now from the above, if you remove the overconfident and inexperienced, this list would be a lot shorter.

As far as the less serious incidents go, a lot of them read like a book ...small error early on, minor equipment failure later, then not enough air for stops or something similar.

Anyway I'm not about to retype all 38 pages just to fill Subscript! I have a copy and so does Mick Morley, ask to borrow it, learn from other's errors, it is a lot less painful than making the same mistake yourself.

One last benefit I had a couple of years back when I borrowed a copy is that my wife Ali saw it, had a read one day and after a few 'I don't like you diving' etc. type comments, concluded that a nice new TX50 regulator would make my diving safer and of course I had to agree!

Diving from Derawan in Borneo

FrancEs Cook



In late 1997 John and I started planning a diving holiday in the far east. We had in mind originally to go to Sipadan in Malaysia but were put off by the reports of overcrowding and poor hygiene there. On the advice of a tour operator we settled instead on going to Derawan, a small island in Northern Borneo off the South East facing coast in the Celebes sea. The resort

there was still small and developing and there seemed a better chance of having a more relaxed holiday.



Figure 1 Map showing approx location of Derawan

As it got closer to our departure date in June 1998 we started to see reports of civil unrest in Indonesia. There were riots in Jakarta and people were being killed. The foreign office internet site advised against going to Indonesia unless it was absolutely necessary. By coincidence a colleague of John's at work was planning a honeymoon in Indonesia at much the same time and decided to change his destination to Mauritius. However both the tour operator and friends, some of whom lived in nearby Brunei, considered our actual destinations, Balikpapan, Berau and Derawan, all out of the way places, would be quite safe. My own experience of the reporting of unrest in the media lead me to believe them and so John and I decided to go on the holiday anyway.

The Journey

In late June we left Heathrow on a 12 hour flight to Singapore. After an overnight stop there we caught our connecting flight to Balikpapan, a small town in Indonesian Borneo otherwise known as Kalimantan. In Balikpapan we were met by a staff member from the Derawan Dive operation who handed us our air tickets for the next stage of our trip as well as asking us to deliver 2 bulky envelopes. One contained some money for another staff member and the other had 2 Stab jacket hoses to be delivered to the Derawan Dive Resort (DDR). This was the moment when we thought that we were really in the back of beyond where transportation was so poor that we were acting as couriers. This was not strictly true as we were able to use our mobile phone as we later discovered.

The plane we caught in Balikpapan was so antiquated it ought to have been in an air museum. It was a small plane with wooden chair armrests riddled with woodworm. Seating arrangements were like a game of musical chairs with me being the loser. John being ever so gallant had found a seat for himself. The problem was solved by a small child being removed from his seat and dumped on his sibling's lap. I prayed the plane wouldn't crash in the rainforest. It was a 2 hour flight to Berau in the north east. On arrival we were met and taken by van a short distance to the Kelai River where a small powerboat was waiting for us. Our dive bags and luggage were stowed with the food and fuel supplies for DDR. The 2 crew did not speak English and I had to try my rather patchy Malay on them. At this point we still did not know the exact location of our dive resort as it was too small to be on the maps. I learnt that it would be an hour before reaching the mouth of the river and another hour at sea before we reached Derawan Island. The muddy waters carried not only boat traffic but sawn logs from the timber industry upriver. Our skipper avoided the logs by having good eyesight and skilled practise. Finally we saw Derawan with its palm fringed white sandy beach, fishing boats and its long wooden piers. We had arrived and were warmly welcomed by the staff with fruit juice and noodle soup. We arrived just after 3 pm and were told to get ready for a check-out dive at 5pm! We were keen to get into the water but this was taking keenness to extreme, especially after our long journey. But feeling hot and sticky in the humid climate we were more than ready to get in the water.

Check out dive

I felt even worse once I had donned my two-piece 5mm wetsuit and wondered why our dive guide was looking at me so quizzically. It wasn't until I hit the water that I discovered that instead of cooling off I was even hotter thanks to a water temperature of 31°C. OK so it shows

I haven't been tropical diving before. We soon noticed other divers were wearing 2mm one-piece wetsuits and after that first dive I discarded my top and wore one of John's long-sleeve white shirts instead.

We dived off the end of the pier taking in a sunken wooden ship known as the "new wreck" with its resident shoal of batfish, saw four green turtles, numerous hard and soft corals as well as chequered snappers, trunkfish etc. Viz was not great at just 5+m.

During the holiday we dived off several nearby islands. Here are the highlights encountered on each of them.

Sangalaki Is.

Just under an hour's boat ride from Derawan lies Sangalaki Island. It is fringed with white sandy beaches, strewn with shells and scurrying hermit crabs. Walking leisurely round the island we spotted many turtle tracks on the beach. The interior of the island is mostly palm-fringed jungle although there is one small resort building and a couple of locally owned houses. The island is so small fresh water has to be shipped in even for this tiny population.

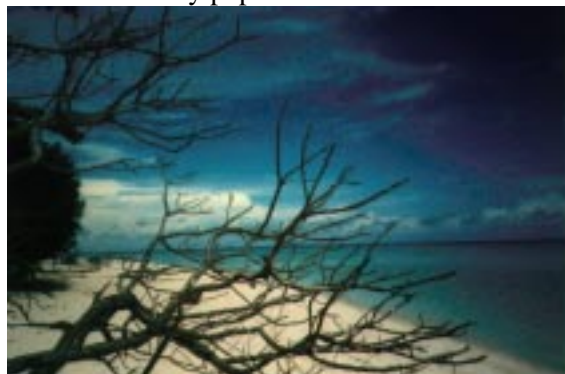


Figure 2 Sangalaki Is

One of the under-water highlights must be at "Manta-run" and, as the name suggests, this is where one can see Manta rays. We saw these graceful Mantas filter feeding quite close to the surface and in very shallow water. Some of our best encounters with Manta's were during snorkelling at lunch time. Snorkellers take heart - you can see some incredible sights without scuba equipment, and not just Mantas. During one of the lunch time breaks I was lucky enough to witness green turtles mating.

Another highlight of Sangalaki were the cuttlefish. On one dive John managed to film two large cuttlefish near a coral head with a third swimming close by the pair, like a cuttlefish gooseberry. We noticed one of the pair inserting its front tentacles into the coral head. It was doing this to deposit eggs safely inside. From the right angle they could just be seen, small and round like small ping-pong balls. The colour changes on these cuttlefish were fascinating, varying from a speckled to totally black in a matter of seconds. The black colour change happened whenever John approached too close,

although this never seemed to put them off their important work. They looked very sombre as they went about their task, understandably, as we later found out that apparently once cuttlefish reproduce they then die.



Figure 3 Manta taken while snorkelling

Just before the encounter with the cuttlefish we spotted a leopard shark resting on the sea bed. John swam close to it but the rather shy creature swam away when John breathed out.

Kakaban Is

It takes the best part of an hour to reach Kakaban by boat. This uninhabited island is made up of limestone and has subterranean caves. It is thickly forested with steep cliffs on one side and a small sandy beach on the leeward side. What makes this island special is the recent discovery of a lake on the northern part of the island where countless non-stinging jelly fish reside. This is only the second island in the world to have been found with such a lake, the other being one of the islands of Palau in Micronesia. We hiked through the thickly forested interior to the lake during our surface interval, carrying our snorkelling kit. It would have been a major task to take cylinders and other scuba gear as the hike included a climb over some very treacherous and steep limestone causeways which were slippery; remember too the very high temperature and humidity. Our dive guide Ady and some of our fellow divers had warned us about the huge population of blood-thirsty mosquitoes by the lake so Chiho, a female Japanese diver, John and myself drenched ourselves with mosy-repellent for the journey. Ady appeared impervious to the biting insects. It took about half an hour to reach the lake, Ady leading the way.



Figure 4 Ady

First impressions of the lake were that it was very small and calm and completely surrounded by a verdant green forest. The lake is salt water and, strangely, somewhat tidal. This is due to the porosity of the rock and doubtless underwater passages through to the surrounding sea. We entered the lake from a small muddy bank at the end of the trail. As we entered the water on hands and knees to avoid sinking into the mud we began to see a carpet of green weed like a small shrub such as a bright green thyme. At the edge of the lake away from where we entered was a tangle of tree roots like mangroves, most of the roots being covered with a layer of multicoloured sponges, barnacles and starfish. There were jellyfish everywhere, resting upside down on the weed and on the sandy bottom, floating in the water, all around us. In fact there were two types, most being an easily visible brown colour, but there were also some flatter, nearly transparent ones as well. Sizes varied from 1-6 inches in diameter. We touched several jellyfish and it seemed to be true, they don't sting and they felt like - well - jelly. John seemed to disagree since he found that the dark brown ones that were lying on the bottom with their tentacles upward could actually give a very mild irritation if given sufficient cause!

As we swam further from the point of entry we realised that the lake was not in fact small but actually very large; our view of it had been restricted by nearby trees. It probably filled half the island area and it soon became clear that it would be possible to lose sight of the end of the track where Ady was waiting for us. There weren't just jellyfish in the lake. There were also small grey fish about 2-3 inches long, which were very numerous and seemed to have little fear of us. In among the green weed were huge hydra, tubeworms and other indescribable life forms. The life in the lake has been little studied and doubtless much remains to be discovered there.

Diving on Kakaban with its sheer wall drop-offs and strong currents is not for the inexperienced. On one dive Ady misjudged the current and instead of drifting we were finning against it. He was very apologetic afterwards. The classic dive on Kakaban though is known as Barracuda Point. This involves entering the water from the boat anchored on a ledge just above a steep wall. Descending over the edge of the ledge the current quickly picks up, sweeping west along the wall. The water is very clear with viz of 30+m and the wall can be seen disappearing down into the black. All too soon the divers come to a corner on the wall where a rope has been strung for divers to catch and pull themselves out of the current. The rope leads up and around the corner which is where the barracuda tend to gather and spiral, and on into a shallow coral garden. It's an exhilarating dive but a bit of gamble. Not because of the risk of missing the rope and being swept out to sea since the sharp eyed boat skippers are ready for this and would quickly have recovered anyone in that position, but because the whole point of doing the dive was in the hope of seeing sharks, particularly Hammerheads, cruising off the wall. Though we did this dive five times we were not destined to see any Hammerheads. What we did see were silver tip sharks, huge stingrays, and of course, many Barracuda. Ady suggested we stood more chance of spotting Hammerheads if we went deeper and swam away from the reef wall. When we did this we spotted a Blue Marlin during the descent and on a deep ledge saw and filmed a silver tip going after prey. By going so deep and staying so far away from the wall we of course couldn't use the rope to get out of the current so stayed together and made our ascent in blue water. Cruelly, we learned after the dive that one of the Japanese divers ahead of us during the dive *had* seen a Hammerhead but had frightened it off with a flash from his camera. Another dive on Kakaban we had heard about was known as Blue Light Cave. We suggested this dive site to Ady but he had to seek permission to take us there from the resort manager. Apparently they had stopped advertising the cave dive ever since one Malaysian diver panicked during a dive there and had had to be rescued by his dive guide. This would probably have been enough to put us off normally, especially so far away from help, but during this period of the holiday we were diving with a couple of experienced Australian divers, Ian and Nick, who had done the dive before, considered it very safe and wanted to do it again. As you would expect for this challenging dive Ady gave us a rather more thorough than usual SEEDS briefing. The cave entrance is very shallow at a depth of just one metre. Amazingly Ady and I spotted a silver tip shark in the gallery at the cave entrance. In strict order we entered the cave feet first, following Ady in single file.

The narrow entrance dips down and gradually opens out into a cavernous chamber. Our torch beams could barely illuminate the walls at the widest point, while the entrance in the sunlight above us did provide an eerie blue light as the name of the cave promised. We continued to descend until our torches found first the limestone walls, then a few squirrelfish and finally a guide rope which now headed off into the darkness. We followed the guide rope for about seven minutes until we could see the faint blue glows of the dual exits, one at 35 and another at 45m. We emerged through the narrow 35m exit and immediately spotted two turkeyfish patrolling the wall just outside the cave. Dive time in the cave was just nine minutes, leaving us plenty of time to explore the wall during our ascent.

Maratua Is

Maratua is a largish, inhabited, crescent shaped island with an outward facing reef wall covered with beautiful Gorgonian hard and soft corals dropping sharply into the black depths. The viz is exceptional at 35+m. The best dives are subject to strong tidal flows which restrict the possible dive times because of the risks of losing contact with the dive boat.



Figure 5 View from the gazebo near the pier on Maratua

Our second dive near this island at a dive site called "Big fish country" which was also well named was probably the best dive of the holiday. Four minutes into the dive at 30+m we saw a grey reef shark and a Manta, followed shortly by a huge school of spiralling Barracuda blocking the sunlight overhead. Shortly after this in quick succession we saw five grey reef sharks and a white tip so close together that at one point we could see them all simultaneously. Just beyond the Barracuda but near the surface were a pair of eagle rays, followed by a huge school of jacks swimming down the reef wall. The jacks were large but were so dwarfed by the grandeur of the wall and the enormous viz that on John's film they look like minnows. The dive felt like an underwater wildlife film, but they have been edited together from many dives, while this happened all in just one dive.

Derawan Is

Compared to the islands mentioned earlier the underwater viz around Derawan itself is a disappointing 5-10m. This is probably due to its proximity to the mainland and in particular the mouth of the mighty Berau river, while the other islands are further out in the Celebes Sea.



Figure 6 View from the old pier near the fishing village on Derawan

Even so there were some worthwhile sights such as blue triggerfish, pipefish, schools of Batfish, shrimpfish and many green turtles. We were almost guaranteed green turtle sightings on every dive. In fact the turtles were so common that John stopped filming them after a while or we would have come back with nothing but film of green turtles. We also encountered big Moray eels, a tiny ribbon eel and many different coloured anemone fish. Unlike their bold cousins in the Red Sea these were shy and would not attack even when provoked. Instead they very sensibly hid up in their anemone. On a wreck dive we counted six crocodile fish in and around the wreck.

The nudibranchs on Derawan are some of the most colourful I have seen. There were so many different types that in order to remember them I got John to take a still shot of each one I saw. He was utterly fed up of me pointing out nudibranchs and instead took pictures of starfish.

Night dives

Night diving was done at the end of the pier and produced some of the best diving. The marine life was abundant with moray eels, shrimpfish, crayfish, crocodile fish, paperfish, shrimps, and broom-tailed filefish to name but a few. The venomous types were well camouflaged and I was glad Ady pointed out stonefish and scorpion fish resting on the pier supports. There was certainly no need to search for the numerous graceful turkey fish that followed us around during the dives. One was so persistent in following John he wrote on his slate "My buddy". The reason for their attention seemed to be so they could catch their prey with the aid of our torch beams which gave them an unfair advantage. They were bold and happily brushed up

against their diver buddies with their feathery soft fins, a somewhat nerve wracking experience.

The Derawan Dive Resort

The accommodation consists of 20 traditional looking Indonesian chalets with en-suite bathrooms. The bedroom is small and twin-bedded with mosquito nets hanging over each. Each chalet is provided with a ceiling fan and air-conditioning although the operation of the latter was very dependent on the fickle electrical supply to the island. The main power supply to the island operates only during the hours of darkness. The reason for this was unclear but may have been an attempt to slow the rate of increase in electrical consumption for such heavy uses as cooking.



Figure 7 Interior compound of the DDR

In an attempt to overcome this the resort had installed its own small generator for use during the day but it was so inadequate that if more than a few air-conditioning units were switched on none would work properly. Fortunately the ceiling fans seemed to be more tolerant of the fluctuating voltage. An amusing feature was the inconstant way the beds were made. After each days diving we would come back to find the beds had been made up in a different fashion. Some variations were almost unusable like apple pies, sometimes the sheets were over the blankets and sometimes under. I guess the local chamber maids just don't know how to make beds with bed-linen as the local custom is to sleep on the floor on straw mats without even a sheet for covering.

The island has only one restaurant, the one in the resort, claiming to serve Chinese, Indonesian and Western food. As there is nowhere else for divers to go for meals all food is included in the dive package and it's pot luck. Supplies come from the mainland every few days and it was noticeable that as the days went by since the last visit from the supply boat the meals would get more basic. The chef's culinary imagination could be tested to the limits. Once we were served a chicken dish consisting of dubious parts of its scrawny anatomy. There was always enough to eat though and some of the dishes were quite delightful to us although there was a party of Scandinavian divers who complained loudly and bitterly about the quality of the food. They complained about much else as well actually and the impression we gained was that they were determined to have a miserable time.

There was a sort of a shop near the restaurant consisting of a small glass counter and a wall cupboard. It sold toiletries, T-shirts, sweets and postcards. I bought several postcards and asked for stamps to send them. They didn't have enough stamps for all the postcards and the shop keeper said he would ask for some more to be sent on the next supply boat, but he wanted to be paid in advance. I was happy to do this but to make sure I didn't get cheated I asked for a receipt. The exchange rate was like a telephone number so I was never sure how much anything was costing. John later told me I had asked for a receipt for 50p. There was no television in the rooms or any organised night time entertainment on the island. The best entertainment was to ask to go out with the turtle warden and watch turtles laying eggs around the sandy beaches of the island. This seemed to happen most nights we were there. The other possibility was to sit in the partially open air restaurant in the sea breeze and be entertained by your fellow divers. One group of Singaporean divers seemed to have a real ball, getting drunk and making their own music with guitars, using this for a sort of impromptu karaoke. Alternatively there was the option of watching what the Scandinavians had managed to find to complain about today. If all this wasn't enough there was sky-gazing. The night sky was usually clear and of course completely unaffected by any nearby light pollution. The sheer number of stars visible was stunning. After this it was early to bed with a good book and a swig of the duty free whisky.

Derawan is very out of the way, necessitating a long journey and once there the facilities may be a bit basic. It is also of course not a cheap holiday but the weather and the diving makes it more than worth the visit. The Indonesian people we met were very friendly and helpful so our decision to ignore the reports of civil unrest turned out to be a good one.

Egypt '98 Diary

Paul Skirrow

Our ritual pilgrimage to Sharm El Sheik was more popular than ever, with 14 divers and 11 non-divers who all enjoyed the snorkelling. We booked through Morley Tours as usual and rumour has it that Mick is leaving BT soon to concentrate on his ever-expanding holiday business...

For those who are new to the club, I should explain that Mick has been arranging very popular trips to the Red Sea for several years and seems to be an expert at negotiating good deals. Sharm El Sheik is a popular diving resort near the southern tip of the Sinai desert and the diving is excellent although some areas can get rather crowded with dive boats. The diving is more impressive and less explored further south but that generally means being on a 'live aboard' rather than staying in a hotel as we did this time.



Friday 13th November

It's 4.05am and my watch has been beeping almost continuously since 4 o'clock. It must be time to get up... Frankenstein (our monster cat) was so bemused by us appearing and feeding him in the middle of the night that he had to hide under the bed - in the middle where he knows we can't reach him. The pile of luggage that has been amassing in the front room over the last couple of days probably hadn't helped his mood either. Tracey 'did something' to get him out, which is probably best not mentioned and he came out snarling and complaining. I thought the extra large food bowl might pacify him - he'd been meowing constantly for food the night before when I was recording the answering machine message: 'Hello, I'm afraid Paul and Tracey are away, Meow, and Octopus Systems is closed, Meow, so please leave a message after the Meooooow...'.
Despite our best efforts we found we weren't last on the coach - Paul Beaumont came in with a serious challenge to our title, arriving just a few seconds after 5am when the coach was scheduled to leave.

Soon after we set off, Mick sheepishly announced that he'd not checked the flight time until late last night only to discover that the flight left 3 hours later than we thought. We could have stayed in bed until 7.30! I suggested that we turn back for some more sleep but it went unheeded... Good job I've got my trusty Psion to log such things for the Christmas Turkey awards. Everybody was very excited and talkative at first, but after a while most of us stopped talking and tried to get some sleep. All except for Dave Tonge who just kept on going and going. I had to re-open the Christmas Turkey awards file to nominate him for a Duracell bunny. We stopped for breakfast on the M25 where we introduced Doreen and Suzie to the fun game of winding up Phil Sheppard (otherwise known as Mr Gullible). It wasn't long before Doreen was telling him about the awful storms in Egypt caused by hurricane Mitch. It's just too easy...*[I was very tempted to edit this bit out - Ed]*

Apparently Tracey has promised Phil's wife Suzanne that he won't enjoy his holiday too much as she got left behind with the baby. We're going to monitor Phil very carefully and ensure that no wind-up opportunity is missed.

Gatwick airport provided the obligatory early morning alcohol in the form of a blackcurrant vodka sampler in the duty free. The Airbus 321 left just after 12.15pm with bright sunshine above the clouds hinting at a taste of the week ahead.

Flying in to Sharm is always a spectacular experience with the flat blue water contrasting with the dry desert and distant mountains. The plane banks round quite sharply before landing yielding superb views of the dive boats near the Straits of Tiran.

The procedure at Sharm airport seemed amazingly efficient at first and we got our visas in record time. Sadly that was only the first layer of bureaucracy as we had to join a second queue to get the Visas stamped and that moved at around the speed that coral grows. We arrived at the Tropicana Inn around 9pm. This is a new sister hotel to the original Tropicana where we stayed a few years ago. It is a couple of miles south of Naama Bay which houses the dive centres and most of the hotels but travelling between the two was quite easy with plenty of helpful taxi drivers.

Saturday 14th November

A minibus picked us up from the hotel and took us straight to the Red Sea College dive centre in Naama bay where we packed our dive gear into a small plastic crate which was to stay on the boat for the week. After a short introductory talk we headed to the King Minas which was a little crowded with such a large group but we appreciated being able to keep the whole group together rather than being split across two boats. We

had two instructors for the week: a rather grumpy chap called Pete and a much more laid back irishman called Snowy.

The first dive was in Middle Garden which is quite close to Naama Bay. Closer even than Far Garden, although not quite as close as Near Garden (don't worry - the names get more imaginative later on...). The first dive was limited to 25m and we stayed together as a group with Snowy pointing out interesting features. Within a few minutes we found four Crown of Thorns which are becoming increasingly common in the Red Sea and quite a problem. They are large brown spiky, alien-looking creatures which can devour about a square metre a day of the coral reef. They've only appeared in any number in the last year or two although nobody is sure why their population has increased so dramatically. Some say it is part of natural cycle which clears the reef every 150 years while others argue that the wide-spread collection of Triton shellfish is to blame as they are amongst the few predators of the Crown of Thorns. Some of the dive marshals are trying to preserve the reef by collecting the Crown of Thorns by night, when they come out, and burying them in the desert.

After lunch aboard the boat we did a slow drift dive around a small headland at Far Garden where we saw several Lion Fish clinging to the coral and one swimming.

Red Sea diving is always very relaxing. The boat has two decks and there is ample room upstairs to stretch out and enjoy the sun between dives. The air temperature was around 28°C most days and the water was warm enough that a thin wet suit or half a semi-dry was ample. Even snorkelling in a swimming costume for an hour was quite pleasant.

Back on shore we introduced the novices to the delights of Egyptian beer, explaining the rigorous checks that need to be performed. Some people use the ABC mnemonic: Additives, Bubbles, Cockroaches, whilst others use BRA: Bubbles, Roaches, Additives. The 'additives' are any kind of particulate matter floating in the bottle. The Bubble check ensures that there are enough bubbles to give the beer some life without it fizzing over the floor and dissolving the table. We explained how really experienced drinkers could do things that novices shouldn't attempt and that Dave Lock is a legend in our time. Not only did he survive drinking half a beer with a dead cockroach, he was able to dive the next day.

Sunday 15th November

Tower is another popular dive site south of Sharm, named after a tower of rock above the dive site, with a spectacular canyon running out from a small beach into deep water. It is hard to imagine, looking at the dry

arid landscape, that the huge canyon was created by flood water following flash floods. We swam down the canyon with the wall on our left past hundreds of small glass fish in a cave. Later in the dive we saw a Lion fish swimming near one of many large and very colourful coral heads. We turned round and swam back across the canyon with spectacular 30m viz in all directions and deep blue water beneath us.

After lunch we did a drift dive at Paradise. Drift dives in the Red Sea are generally quite slow and pleasant with a very slight current moving you slowly along a wall. We saw some large Barracuda slightly above us and later on we found a Grey Moray sticking its head out of a hole. Its head was probably 4cm across although I think I was far more excited about it than my buddy who was diving in the Red Sea for the first time. To him everything he saw was new and exciting, he'd already seen a larger black moray and didn't know that it is quite unusual to find a grey moray.



Monday 16th

'Did you see the moray?', 'Did you see the octopus?', 'Who saw the shark?'. With all these shouts after the dive it's easy to think that everybody else saw all of these things and you were the only one who didn't. It's important to realise that only one pair saw each of these things and asking who didn't see things can be far more encouraging...

We did a drift dive at Musrani in the morning where the current took us round the headland to a very pretty coral garden totally covered with brain coral and soft coral. It also had lots of underwater springs which made the water shimmer and there were very noticeable temperature changes as you swam past. We finished the dive in the sandy bay by the boat mooring where several Lion fish were sleeping upside down under the ledges around the bay.

We swam to the boat through a seemingly endless chain of small blue needlefish just below the surface. As we broke the chain into two, like small children running through pigeons in the town square, I idly wondered if this was an essential mechanism to help split over-large shoals into smaller shoals which go there separate ways, destined never to meet again. Perhaps us divers are already becoming an essential part of the natural eco-system. Looking back I was disappointed to see they'd already found themselves again but I resisted the temptation to try again.

Every day there was ample opportunity to go snorkelling where the boat moored up over lunch and even from the surface the sheer quantity and variety of wildlife is quite breathtaking.

We borrowed a Sony digital camcorder in the afternoon although I found it quite distracting to use. Trying to stay in position and film particular fish is quite difficult although Rob did put together an excellent video comprising the best clips from the week.

Most of us stayed on the boat and did a night dive in the evening at Near Garden where we saw several parrot fish, and Tracey found one well hidden in a hole wrapped in its mucous cocoon in which it sleeps. It was a brown and grey pattern rather than the more familiar blue, green and yellow although we saw plenty of those presumably looking for somewhere to spend the night. We saw several Lion fish but they were stationary rather than hunting - perhaps it was too early or perhaps they were waiting for the divers to depart. Another creature which is rarely seen during the day was a long segmented worm with the numerous tentacles around its mouth, shovelling food in. There were plenty of fish at around 10m and what looked like a dark shadow amongst them proved to be a Barracuda which sat in our torchlight for a minute before darting into the shoal at high speed. Finally we found a well-camouflaged, ugly looking Stone Fish with its distinctive upside-down mouth.

Tuesday 17th

My first dive was with Dawn at Gordon Reef. We followed the shallow slope down to the reef wall where almost immediately we found two white tip reef sharks about 15m below us, swimming in circles by the reef wall. Others on the dive saw a large eagle ray swimming past and a small octopus.

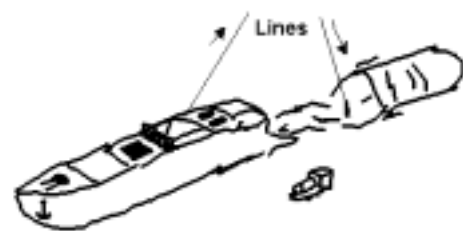
After our first dive we had a superb snorkelling trip on Gordon reef. It was quite a swim to the reef, but well worth it. I found two blue spotted rays hiding in the sand at 3m and a couple of Crown of Thorns's. One of them was crawling slowly across the sea bed and its mass of tiny sucker feed were clearly visible on the underside of its alien body. I got within 50cm of a brown electric ray as it swam past and even got close

to two needlefish near the surface. Who needs to go diving?

Wednesday 18th: The Thistlegorm

The Thistlegorm was carrying arms to North Africa during WWII when a German bomber spotted it and dropped bombs directly into his centre hold. It is quite a way from Naama Bay so we had to leave the hotel at 4.45am for a long journey by boat round the tip of the Sinai and into the Gulf of Suez. Despite the early start there were already 5 other boats moored on the Thistlegorm with even more chasing us.

The Thistlegorm's popularity is well justified. It lies in 27m of water with the bow section completely intact, the centre hold away is blown away and the stern is also intact but lying on its port side:



We dropped down the line to the rear hold area and swam past a pile of large shells to the stern on the port (deck side) and then over the top to see the massive anchor below us (in 30m of water). Each blade is about 2m long. We followed the starboard side and swam through another railed passage on the deck, imaging the people who once walked there. We found a large bomb on small trolley and the tender for the steam engine (the engine is some distance away from the main wreck but just visible). We swam over the hold full of rifles and into a small cabin via a corridor.

We passed some large tuna and a couple of clown fish ferociously defending the anemone. They seem to think the whole area is theirs, not appreciating nor caring that it was all man-made.

Coming to the bow we passed the port anchor which was in its normal place and the starboard anchor chain (which was down). On the deck the two anchor chains led to the winch and Steve said he did a Titanic impression leaning over the front of the bow (Snowy said the crew played the Titanic theme tune just before his last dive here).

After a spectacular dive we ascended up another line and enjoyed our decompression stop watching the nearby bat fish and the divers teaming over the fizzing wreck below. We estimated there were around 50 divers. On the second dive we penetrated the wreck to see the inside of the holds. We followed Snowy into a hold nearer the bow and swam round the edge of the hold over rows of motorbikes and some large trucks. We

swam through a small passageway and ascended through a rather tight hole near the bow. The bow area is probably my favourite part of the wreck as you get a really good feel for the size and layout of the ship from there.

Looking at the wreck from the line is quite interesting as there are masses of bubbles rising from all parts of it. We estimated there were 50 divers on the wreck which together must be expiring nearly a thousand litres of air every minute. The resulting sight with bubbles bursting from every small hole is quite spectacular.

Thursday 19th

We have a new dive guide today, Monica, who replaces Pete 'Grumpy Bastard' Dalton. She stayed in the cabin most of the day as did most of the male divers for some reason, instead of sunning themselves on the top deck as was the norm.

In the morning I buddied up with Phil Sheppard for a dive on Jackfish Alley. We swam through the cave at 7m but were disappointed to find it virtually empty so we kept on managing to get ahead of the chaotic shoal of Italian divers who'd jumped in from another boat at the same time. The first few minutes were uneventful but then we saw a huge black and white box fish sitting with its mouth open waiting for a cleaner wrasse to clean its teeth and I was pleased to find large black and gold moray sticking its head out of some coral. Somehow it is always more satisfying spotting things for yourself rather than having them pointed out. Phil found a patch of sand moving slowly across the bottom which turned into a flatfish. It had perfect camouflage and was exactly the same colour and texture as the sandy bottom.

As we reached the sandy patch we encountered about 20 barracuda, each a good metre and a half long. We got within 5m of one which sat watching us with its mouth open, bearing its teeth. A small fish brushed past its tail making it jump and zoom away at high speed. After a dive it is important to surface close to the coral wall, signal to the boat and then swim out, staying close to other divers, ready to be picked up. This time the pick-up was quite hairy with a big swell and three boats picking up simultaneously – I'm always impressed at how they manage to pick up their own divers without getting us all mixed.

We moored by Shark reef for lunch and did some excellent snorkelling between shark reef and the adjacent Yolanda reef. We did our last dive of the holiday there dropped down onto some wreckage with masses of toilet basins. The wreck itself slid into deep water leaving its cargo of toilets and a BMW which has now all but disintegrated. Mick said the wreck must have been huge - if they needed 2000 toilets there must have been a big crew although personally I blame the

Egyptian beer. Tracey had the dubious pleasure of seeing Dave T sitting on one of the toilets...

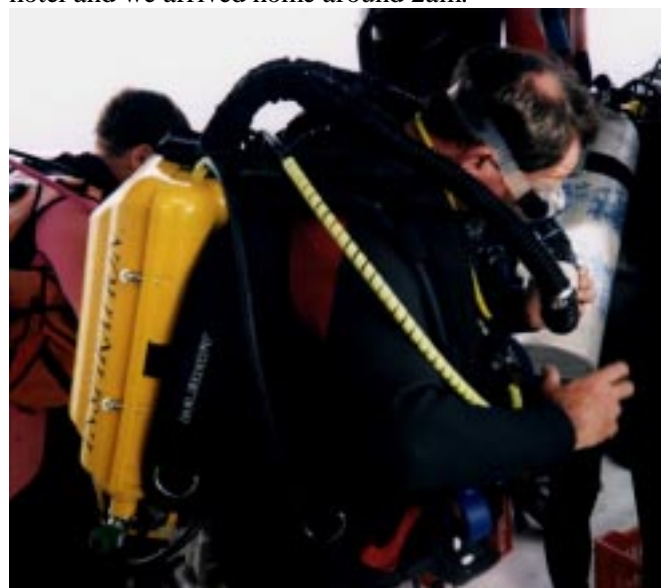
I found a moray in the first few minutes and shouted Phil to attract his attention (surprisingly it worked). Just as we left the moray there was a ping from Monica who pointed out a scorpion fish on a metal frame. She pinged to show us another one on the other side. Later on we found 3 more morays and a very large hump head wrasse. Later in the dive we saw 20 jacks swimming in a tight circle 10m below us, plug-hole style.

I thought it was an excellent dive to finish on, even though Tracey and Suzie spent the next couple of hours telling us about their sharks and turtles, seen on the same dive...

Everybody was rather subdued on the way back to port, knowing the holiday was nearly over but the spectacular red sunset over almost made up for it, and demonstrating why it is the Red Sea.

Friday 20th

The last day was spent on the beach in front of the dive centre. We found a porcupine fish in 5m of water and the braver ones in the party (or perhaps just those that managed to scrape together some remaining cash) went parascending. The coach pick up was at 6pm from the hotel and we arrived home around 2am.



Dave Lock & his rebreather in the Red Sea

Skelligs trip planned

Robert Spray (work tel. 642881)

[Copied from emails with no editing except the most blatant spelling mistakes ☺, - Ed]

27/1/99

Well after a limited consultation exercise at the pub on Saturday it seems that the third week in August would

be a good one for most people. Could those that definitely can and want to come please stake their claims...

I reckon a week is Sunday to Saturday, but I may be proved wrong, this week would therefore run from 15th to 21st August.

At present the favoured method of travel is by car and ferry, and most people are happy with B&B style accommodation. The accommodation may be the most difficult bit since its high holiday season then. Although there's the fall back of the dive centre dormitory most people seem rightly wary of that kind of private school cosiness.

Replies ASAP if possible, thanks

21/01/99

Rather than separate the interested and ambivalent I'll send this to the list in case any wants to pick this up as we go along...

There seems to be enough interest for a trip in the first half of August to be practical. Though boat bookings being what they are something needs to be done soon.

So by my reckoning the following are interested; Andrew Auchterlonie, Jonathon Legh-Smith, Hannah Miniss, Karen Gould, Philip Harman [who I forgot to include in the last list - sorry], Susie Young, Steve Davies, Phil Clarke [Argonaut and prose star of Scuba World (this month?), would any more Argonauts be keen?], Me and of course Dawn.

Hopefully you saw the mail of likely costs, we could now do with deciding on a definite week for the jaunt and rustling up some deposits (about 25%) so that we can stake a claim.

I await the inevitable flood of e-mail with baited breath.

11/1/99

Sorry I've taken so long to do anything about this. I've posted this to those that have expressed an interest and cc'd it to the whole list to see who has been particularly lucky over Christmas collecting beer tokens.

After talking to people and getting quite a few e-mail replies I'd be inclined not to go with Ballinskelligs as even a couple of bad reports are too many. I have had Skellig Aquatics recommended and if people were happy to go away from the Skelligs themselves Scubadive West have a good reputation.

Although I had been thinking in terms of going in late in the year, to allow for semi dry divers, I have been told that there is a price to pay for better temperatures - rain and poorer viz. The viz is better early in the season and apparently it rains alot anyway but lots in August. So I asked for prices around May for comparison.

Pricewise this isn't really a cheap option taking in to account travel etc but it is different from the Red Sea and I'm sure that you'd get bored of warm, clear, blue water in the end. It looks like from £350pp +petrol if we chose the most basic accommodation.

The prices below are to give an idea of the costs assuming we are a fairly small group (6-8) - perhaps now I have got my finger out others will be interested....

Skellig Aquatics

7 nights self catering accommodation in the dive centre (This is the cheapest option <£10 per night)

Return ferry, Cylinders weights and air, 6 days diving with 2 dives per day.

Drive and ferry (May) £317+petrol per person. (For 3 per car add an extra £11 per person)

Drive and ferry (August) £350+petrol per person (For 3 in a car add an extra £17 per person)

Scuba dive west (+Accomodation £10-20per night)

5 days and 11 dives (inc 1 night dive 'free') tanks, weight, belts.

Drive and ferry (May) £170+petrol per person (4 to a car)

Drive and ferry (August) £200+petrol per person (4 to a car)

Fly and drive (May) £255+airport petrol(if 4 or more diving)

Fly and drive (August) £285+airport petrol(if 4 or more diving)

Diving Incidents concern

A letter to Diver magazine from Dave Tonge

I have been in the sport for 10 years, and am now an Advanced Diver and qualified instructor. I have noted with concern the increasing number of incidents that divers are becoming involved in. Over the same period, I have noted a much more casual attitude to what I would regard as deep diving.

When I took up the sport in 1989, 30m was considered a deep dive, and much planning and aforethought was given to such an adventure - with an appropriate programme of work-up dives. These days, it seems that even relatively inexperienced divers regard 30m as

routine, and many are evidently diving to considerably greater depth.

With this in mind, as I browsed through the October issue of Diver, two items caught my eye:

1. (page 32 - John Bantin) "They call it the Titanic of the Caribbean, and it seems to be visited by divers about as frequently as its northern counterpart. Which is strange, as it lies in a <<mere>> 50m of water....."
2. (page 78 - BSAC News) "A catalogue of diving accidents around Britain during August left five dead and numerous others bent. On 17 August, two divers, aged 20 and 50, from Leicester, died after diving on to a wreck at a depth of 50m, 25 miles off Littlehampton."

I cannot help but wonder if use of the word "mere" with regard to 50m depth, and similar casual reporting of 30m + dives by the diving press these days, is not inadvertently weakening the perception that <<all>> diving carries attendant risks, but that 30m and deeper diving in particular is a serious business that requires a progressive, professional and conservative approach if these risks are to be successfully managed.

BSAC Regional meeting

Dave Lock, (01473) 605622

A Regional Meeting will be held in Cambridge on the evening of Wednesday 3rd March. This will be a chance to air your views on Branch, Regional and National BSAC Issues. Ali White and the new Eastern Region Coach will be there plus a couple of representatives from HQ. If there is enough interest in attending we ought to share cars, can I have an indication who would like to attend?

Skill Development Courses

Dave Lock (plus additional information from Tracey Skirrow - Ed)

I've attached the Eastern Region SDC list for 1999, plus other info. I'm now Skill Development Course Organiser (SDCO) for the Eastern Region so if you want to attend any of these please contact me or for our local BTRSAC club-organised courses shown in **bold** type below contact Tracey Skirrow on 01473 728943.

Eastern Region Coaching Scheme SDCs 1999

Feb	6/7th	Disability Awareness	TBA
	27/28th	VHF Radio	
March	6 th	First Aid for divers	

	13/14th	Oxy Admin/Rescue First Aid	St Albans
	27/28th	Boathandling/Diver Cox'n	Felixstowe
	??	Equipment Care	
April	2/3 April	Combined Nitrox	
	10/11th	PRM (Sun 11th)	Ipswich - Alton
	17/18th	Search & Recovery	Ipswich - Alton
May	8/9th	Extended Range Diving	TBA
	22/23rd	Adv Diving Techniques	Portland
June	5/6 th	Dive Planning/Marshalling	Portland
Sept	25/26th	Nitrox Basic/Adv/Combined	Ipswich - Alton
Oct	2/3rd	Boathandling/Diver Cox'n	Felixstowe
	9/10th	PRM (Sun 10th), Ipswich - Alton	
	23/24th	Full Face Mask	TBA
Nov	6/7th	Oxy Admin/Rescue First Aid	Ipswich???
	20/21st	Harrogate	UWW

Note: PRM = Practical Rescue Management

To book the following Nationally organised courses contact Jill Parkes at BSAC HQ.

Instructor Training Course (ITC) Dates:

Feb 20/21 Cambridge
 April 9/10 Cambridge
 October 23/24 Ipswich

CIE (Club Instructor Exam? - Ed)

March 21 Ipswich
 May 22 Hendon
 September 5 Cambridge
 November 27 Hendon

OWIC (Open Water Instructor Course? - Ed)

June 26 Ipswich
 September 25 Ipswich

In addition it looks viable to run branch courses in O2, Boathandling, Deco Workshop and Marine Life Identification. Tracey will be chasing for other courses that we don't have the numbers of students to make viable at the moment!

Prices for our local club-organised courses

VHF course	£47
First Aid for divers	£15
Equipment Care	£15
Combined Nitrox	£70

DIARY DATES

Subscript article submission deadline

19 March 1999.

Events, courses and holidays

For **even more** detail about almost everything see the attached year planner from Andy Saunders! If you've got suggested diving or other events let Andy know and he'll keep it up to date on his web page. Meanwhile I'll keep putting the key dates on this page in Subscript.

Date	Events	Contact
Jan / Feb	Various dives (inland & coastal)	Roy Lobbett / Andy Saunders
March 3	BSAC Regional meeting	Dave Lock
March	Indian curry night	Dave Garrett
April	Australia holiday	too late!
April	Barn Dance	Dave Garrett
May	Quiz night	Dave Garrett
May or August	The Skelligs (Ireland) holiday	Robert Spray
July	BBQ	Dave Garrett
July/August	Weybourne	?
June 18	The Baltic holiday	Dave Lock

Skill Development Courses (SDCs) 1999

For SDC information see the information from Dave Lock & Tracey Skirrow on the previous page.

