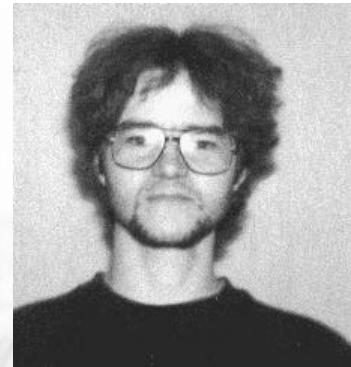


# SUBSCRIPT

The newsletter of the BTRSAC, July 1999

## WANTED?



**Mr FixIt**

aka **Jonathan Legh-Smith**  
Secretary

**The Boss**

aka **Mick Morley**  
Chairman

**The Inquisitor**

aka **Raj Mistry**  
Training Officer

**The Joker**

aka **Rob Spray**  
Equipment Officer

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### Further information:

#### Web pages

From inside BT:

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

From outside BT:

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

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**Jonathan Legh-Smith work tel. (01473) 644682**

Apology from the Editor - This issue is very late being published so if some of the articles sound out of date this is my fault ☹

# Mick's Muses

*Mick Morley (Chairman)*

Life has become even more hectic for me since my last article. Preparing for retirement is very hard work, but no where near as hard as retirement itself! That is by way of an apology for the brevity of this column - I will try to do better in the future.

The committee has been involved in some exciting and unusual work over the past few weeks and I thought you might like to see something of it. We now split our meetings into two sets - operational and planning. The operational meetings deal with the shorter-term issues relating to finances, training, maintenance - and even diving planned for the coming season. The planning meetings look at how things might change over the next three years or so, and how the club will have to adapt to deal with these changes.

I have included some of the output from the planning meetings and I ask you all to look through it and let us have your comments. It outlines some of the more important trends and events which we may need to take into account, and whether we are reasonably confident as to how things will turn out. For those changes which we believe are important but we are not sure of the outcome, we will be looking at alternative possible futures. We can then go on to consider the implications for the club in the short and longer term and take action appropriately. Some of you may recognise this as 'scenario development'.

It really isn't as heavy as it sounds and we would like you all to be part of the thinking process, so please let us have your comments.

This is a very exciting time in the club and I am pleased and proud to be part of it. Raj, John and others are attracting new members to learn to dive and increasingly we are welcoming experienced and highly qualified divers from other organisations. Dave and Tracy have organised the best programme of Skills Development Courses we have ever had - this is vitally important for our safety and the future of the sport. Daren, Andy, Pete and others are doing fantastic work of the boats, trailers, electronics, etc to ensure that we can get the greatest possible use out of these valuable facilities. Andy, Roy, Pete and others are putting together a full diving programme for the season, including expeditions designed for skills development and qualification. Dave is planning a social calendar to give us further excuses to eat, drink and be merry -

about half the club attended the last brilliant curry evening.

This just could turn out to be the best diving season you have ever had. *Enjoy*

\*\*\* MAKE SURE YOU PREPARE YOUR EQUIPMENT AND YOURSELF READY FOR IT. Don't rely on luck - service your kit, practice your skills and plan for safety\*\*\*

## Egypt '98 Diary

*by 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 on the 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 help 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...

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 its 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

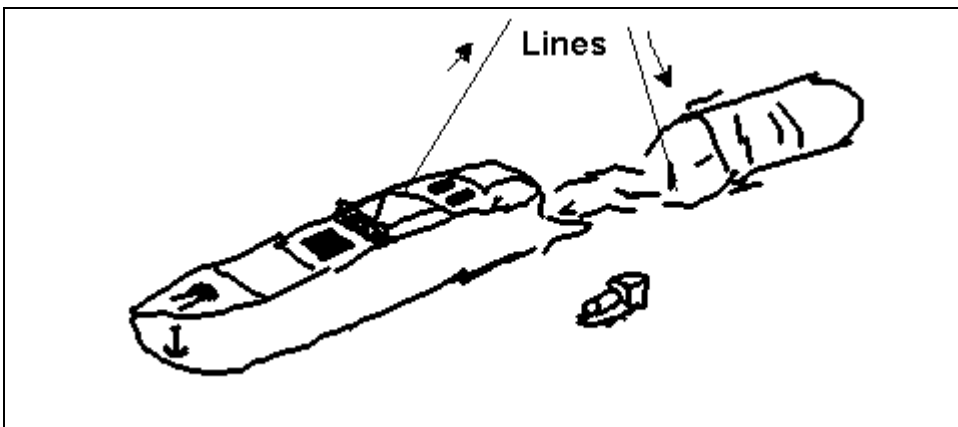
My first dive was with Dawn at Gordon Reef. We followed the shallow slope down to the reef wall where almost immediately we found two white tip reef sharks about 15m below us, swimming in circles by the reef wall. Others on the dive saw a large eagle ray swimming past and a small octopus.

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 is 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 parasailing. The coach pick up was at 6pm from the hotel and we arrived home around 2am.

## Diving Pictures

*Courtesy of Peter Onion*

Peter has been taking images from dives this year and putting them onto his web site (linked from the BTRSAC web site - see front page for URL). I've reproduced a sample of them here (from diving at Alton water on 21<sup>st</sup> March '99) - thanks for these Peter!





## Boat maintenance

*Daren Wood*

Just to whet your appetite for the end of the diving season, I have the following list of "projects" for which I would like volunteers:

- Build mounting jig to support Buzo engine weight on sponsons or trailer during transit.
- Build a mechanism to prevent the Buzo floorboards from popping during use.
- Rationalise and replace damaged straps on Starfish bottle rack. Provide mounting for larger oxygen cylinder
- Build a storage facility to secure the magnetometer to Starfish during transit and use within audible range of the Coxswain.

Please think about whether you would like to take one of these on. I advertise them now so you have the summer to think about/plan it before starting work in the Autumn/Winter.

## Pool Safety

*Paul Skirrow*

The pool is getting quite crowded on Monday evenings and being used for a variety of purposes with a lot of equipment in a slippery environment. To attempt to avoid accidents I've been appointed Pool Safety officer (I guess it was my initials).

We haven't had any serious accidents recently but we all need to take care and follow these guidelines:

1. Keep the pool edge clear of equipment: many of us cannot see much without our glasses and it is easy to slip on a stray Octopush bat or trip over a pair of fins. Put things away in the cubicles wherever possible and lay cylinders down well away from the pool (never leave them standing up).
  2. Stay in designated lines: Swimmers without a mask must stay in the swimming lane (on the pub side), whilst divers must stay on the car park side. Snorkellers with masks are allowed in both areas, but do watch out for divers beneath you and swimmers above you.
  3. Do not swim or practice towing exercises above SCUBA divers and always glance behind you when you are towing.
  4. Look out for divers and snorkellers before jumping in as they are often difficult to spot.
  5. Everybody is welcome to play Octopush, but you **MUST** wear a protective hat (we have spares available) and gloves are a good idea too. Sea fins should not be used for Octopush, and if you are really keen you can ask Diveline to get some special Octopush ALA fins (they're expensive at £50/pair but all the serious Octopush players recommend them and they are rubber so they don't cut if you're hit in the face). Do not enter the pool during an Octopush game if you are not playing and wearing a protective hat.
  6. Sometimes the pool is used for special events, such as the life-saving course, or try-dives. If you are arranging such an event please ensure that everybody knows well in advance and tell people via the Email list and Adline if Octopush, snorkelling or swimming is suspended. Family members often come along for a casual swim so please ensure they know about any other events which might make swimming difficult.
  7. Help divers on with equipment if you see them struggling.
  8. Wherever practical try to ensure people swim in the same direction, eg anti-clockwise in the swimming lane (that's anti-clockwise as seen from above :-)
  9. Keep an eye on other people and be ready to help somebody if they need help. I've often been surprised to see inert bodies in the water being ignored. If it is obviously an exercise that's fine, but one day it might not be.
- Note that the pool schedule allows us into the pool building at 8.20:
- 8.20 We're allowed into the building to get changed (allowed in water at 8.30)

- 8.30 Octopush starts (protective hats MUST be worn)
- 8.50 Pool training and casual swimming
- 9.50 Clear the pool
- 10.00 Clear the building

Please let me know if you have any ideas for improving pool safety (suggestions to cancel Octopush will be ignored), and please help keep the pool as safe as you can.

## Another diver enters the world?

*Andrew Collicott*

Joe's asked me to pass on his good news .....

On the evening of Saturday 24/4 at 11.55pm the daughter of Joe and Tonia Speer came into this world. This is their first child and her name is Sacha.. She weighed in at 8lb 8oz.

## Alton Water Key Ceremony

*Brian Babbs (via Tracey Skirrow) [I'm not getting the blame for reporting this one - Ed]*

Oh did you hear about the ceremony of the keys at Alton water on Monday? Andy Auchterlonie locked his and Susie Young's keys in his car before the dive, called out green flag who took him home to get spare keys. He got home to find himself locked out and had to borrow a ladder from next door to break in. He eventually returned with spare keys and waved farewell to the man in the breakdown truck who set off back to Colchester --- with Andy's dive kit still in the back of the truck . At this point we retired to the Kings Head at Stutton to await the return of the truck and Andy's kit, weak from laughter. As you see another uneventful evening at Alton water.

## SDC review

*Tracey Skirrow*

You've probably all noticed me running around with a clipboard over the last few months, I may even have managed to bully you into doing one or more courses, so now it's time to tell everyone what has been achieved so far.

We have run five branch SDC's (Skill Development Courses) since Christmas, these were Oxygen Administration, Life Saving, First Aid for Divers, Equipment Care and Combined Nitrox. We have also had members take part in several regional SDC's including VHF Radio, Practical Rescue Management and Search and Recovery Courses. This has resulted in 52 and a half new qualifications for club members (Paul Skirrow still has to do the practical he missed because of his broken foot before he gets his Nitrox qualification!).

What's next?

We will be running at least two more branch SDC's this year, these are a Marine Life Identification course in the summer, which most people in the club seem to be keen on, and a Boat Handling SDC (contact Alex Edwards for more details about this one). Hopefully we will also run a Decompression Workshop towards the end of the year, this is for divers with at least one year of experience. Next year I am hoping to get an Expeditions SDC and a Chartwork and Navigation SDC organised. So, Dave, don't run away!

Many thanks!

Running so many courses was only possible thanks to the amazing efforts of Dave 'the man who never sleeps' Lock, Brian Babbs, Wilf Tanser, Steve Webb, Pete Young, John Cook, Raj Mistry and all the other instructors who gave up their time. A big 'thank you' to all of you. Also thanks to everyone who wrote a few lines about the course they took, I hope you enjoy the collected fruits of their labours.

The highlights!

### *Oxygen Administration course – Iain Morley*

On a very cold wintry weekend back in January, several brave skill-seekers ventured forth into the wilds of deepest, darkest Martlesham Heath (BT Labs restaurant) to learn all about the benefits of administering oxygen to casualties of diving accidents. Of course, given the ravages of the weather and the after-effects of Christmas and New Year, not everyone arrived exactly on time; indeed, one particular participant arrived all of twenty-four hours late for the Saturday session. I was very honoured to consequently receive the award for lateness at the New Year awards party. In my gratitude, I neglected to point out the double-standard in that the awards party itself was held almost twenty-four DAYS after New Year, but never mind that.

The course itself was extremely informative, teaching a variety of rescue and resuscitation skills, highlighting

just how much benefit could be gained from administering pure O2 to diving casualties and, perhaps most importantly, how to avoid the situations requiring such skills. The course began with a number of lectures concerning the various conditions and problems that can occur in diving accidents (including DCI, carbon dioxide poisoning and burst lungs) and the benefits that the administration of oxygen can have in each of these situations. This was followed by practical sessions about AV, CPR and the use of oxygen administration equipment. The course concluded with a written test and practical assessment of the skills which had been taught throughout the day (which involved crowding into a pseudo-boat made out of BT chairs) which, happily, were passed by all the participants.

I think I speak for everyone who attended in saying that it is surprising the life-and-death difference that the administration of oxygen can have in an accident, if carried out correctly. I'd recommend the course to anyone who dives or accompanies divers, both for their own benefit and that of those with whom they dive. Plus, you get a nice embroidered patch to sew on to your dive bag/suit hood/hole in your suit knee.

#### ***VHF – Tracey Skirrow***

I did my VHF course several years ago, so I was very glad to get the opportunity to go on a free refresher course, as I was sure that I had forgotten most of what I had learnt previously. Amongst other things, the course covered the services the coastguard provides, the operation of a VHF set, which channel to hail the coastguard on and how to send out a mayday call. You also learn how to take part in a mayday relay operation and there are plenty of opportunities to practise what you learn through the day. The exam takes place on the second day of the course, and it is taken by an RYA examiner so you get RYA certification as well as the BSAC recognition.

#### ***First Aid for Divers - Sharon Buckingham***

Tracey was at her persuasive best saying "Give me your money - you will enjoy it", but I thought to myself "First Aid! I know about First Aid, bandages, burns, slings and stings, so what's new?". Well, when you get in a make-believe boat with a load of divers, it can be great fun as I was soon to find out.

After a run through of the basics of general First Aid, we got down to divers and First Aid. The room was filled with divers, ropes, dive bags, weight belts, wetsuits and even paddles! One of the things covered on the course is control of bleeding, as some divers carry very large sharp knives, and cut themselves with said knives (by accident of course). We learnt to use a diving

glove to help with a hand wound and a hood for a head wound. Other diving items were also used for new purposes, snorkels and knives become splints and two paddles and a wetsuit become a stretcher. Better than any magic show on the box!

We all took turns at using all the bits and pieces to stop bleeding make slings, splint broken bones and pad out other areas to keep the poor victim comfortable.

"Are you all right dearest?" enquired Tracey of her husband, Paul. "muffmm-mmbphummf" replied Paul from the depth of his head bandage while laying on the wetsuit and paddle stretcher with both legs strapped together by weight belts and a sausage SMB used in a most unusual fashion (to pad between his knee and ankle bones you understand). All in all great fun day learning, refreshing or improving your First Aid skills and to try improvising splints and slings from your diving kit.

#### ***Equipment Care – Richard Wilkinson***

Being about to buy myself some pretty expensive new kit, I thought I'd better take some time to get to know how to prevent it from falling apart after my first trip into open water. Luckily, an equipment care course was scheduled for 20th March – the ideal opportunity to learn.

After finding our way to the BT restaurant block, we buckled down to learn how to care for masks, BCs, tanks, suits, regulators and other miscellaneous items. We also had a "cylinder identification" contest and learnt an interesting method of inflating a dry suit using only a football and two plastic bottles. We finished up with two videos, one of which explained exactly how shops like Diveline get to keep their British Safety kitemarks and the other explained how to make minor repairs to your dry suit. The unofficial Club Documenter, Peter Onion, took plenty of photos, which are available to non-BT viewers on <http://www.btinternet.com/~peter.onion/20Mar99/index.html>. We also had a demonstration of Dave Tonge's novel coffee making technique – basically you take a full jar of coffee, put two teaspoons of it into a cup and then add boiling water to the jar. Dave guarantees that it adds zing to any dive!

#### ***Nitrox – Dawn Watson.***

I expected this course to be very dry/technical, but it turned out to be very interesting and not too difficult. I usually employ someone to kick me into consciousness during lectures, but the only person to fall asleep was Brian! (probably due to stress). Dave, Steve and Brian coped very well with the facilities - no air conditioning

and a suicidal projector so the six hours of lectures flew by. One of the most surprising things we found out is that there is a situation where O2 shouldn't be given, which is when someone is suffering from oxygen toxicity.

The practical part was at Guildenberg, which was cold, dark and full of other people who wished they had stayed in bed. The skills required were good buoyancy and familiarity with delayed SMBs.

I couldn't dive without this qualification, but I think it is equally important knowledge for all divers.

Another highlight was Dave Lock singing the Spam song, perhaps we can have a repeat performance at the Christmas do, Dave?

### ***Practical Rescue Management – Paul Beaumont***

The PRM SDC is about teaching you how to manage a rescue situation and at the same time brushes up your core rescue skills. The course does involve some chalk 'n' talk; but first and foremost - as its title implies - it's a "hands-on" practical course. Which in a zero risk environment gives you the chance to practise being a rescue manager, tossing a rope accurately, parbuckling a casualty into a boat and much more besides. Should you ever find yourself in a real life incident, the likelihood is significantly increased of you contributing to a successful rescue - either as the rescue manager or a member of the rescue team. Plus it counts towards Dive Leader qualification too if you are working towards that. Lastly, where else would you get the opportunity to land our illustrious regional coach (Dave Lock) and deposit him in a pile of dog poo? Certainly no smelling salts were needed to revive the casualty on this occasion!

### ***Search and Recovery – Mike Saucedo***

8:45 Saturday 17/5/99 and the sun was shining brightly but the wind was cold. The Search and Rescue course started promptly at 8:46, and as the first 2 lecture sessions progressed the plastic seats got colder and colder. With the onset of hypothermia creeping up my legs it was time to eat the emergency rations and order the all day breakfast for lunchtime, this was sure to stoke up the calories before the diving in the afternoon.

There were 18 people on the course divided into 4 groups, our club was represented by Tracey Skirrow, Mike Saucedo, Andy Mordecai, Daren Wood and Paul Beaumont. The first practical session outside brought out a dazzling array of woolly hats and gloves to stem the biting cold wind. We were organised into the 4

groups and challenged with some simple exercises for the students (or was it exercises for the simple students?). This reinforced the morning lecture sessions and we set up a range of buoy systems including marker, lazy shots and decompression stages. By now some of the practicalities of setting up some of the more complex systems was becoming apparent.

In the afternoon we walked through the circular search and jack stay search and the benefit of the dry run became very evident, by the time we had finished the whole team understood the objective of the exercise and everyone understood their individual role. It was a sight to behold watching Daren Wood and Andy Mordecai holding hands while walking through the jack stay exercise. They were awarded second place in the underwater line dancing championship. Next year I will be there with the video camera ready to claim £200 from Jeremy Beadle. By the end of day 1 we had confidently deployed a marker buoy and completed the two underwater search techniques.

The second day was a weather forecaster's dream, it was warm and sunny, cold and windy, it poured with rain and finished with a shower of hailstones - well this is Alton Water not Alton Towers! The task we had to complete today had two distinct parts:- the search and the recovery. As good students we implemented what we had learnt, we planned the search, planned the rescue, performed our dry run on the surface and entered the water with confidence. Then we completely b\*\*\*\*\* it up.

We had learnt this really neat technique to crochet up a rope, which reduced its length to 1/4 of its original length. Yesterday it had worked a like a dream, today it deployed about 2/3 of its length and then jammed, and there was no way we were going to release the last 1/3. We decided to make do with what we had, but by the time that we had taken the slack out of the rope the jack stay was decidedly too short. After 2 circular search rotations I could see the end of the jack stay and realised that the line we were using (which had been passed to us by the instructor!) was floating line. The last desperate attempt to lengthen the jack stay resulted in lots of lovely brown stuff rising from the bed reducing the viz to b\*\*\*\*\* all. It's times like this when you wish you were somewhere else. Our instructor came to the rescue and moved us out of the mud bath into clearer water where we located the object and performed the survey by using slates pre-marked in 5 cm divisions.

The first part of the plan was now complete and it was time to brief the second party to complete the recovery. The recovery appeared to go quite smoothly and all the

equipment was towed back to the shore. Unfortunately my buddy turned their dry suit into a tea bag and was given sick leave to change before shaking to bits with frost bite.

Although we had not executed a perfect search I was reminded that I am always preaching that you only learn by making mistakes, in which case we learnt a hell of a lot!

Congratulations must go to Dave Lock, Brian Babbs, Wilf Tanser, Martin Royal, and the other instructors for putting so much effort into planning the weekend which all ran exceptionally smoothly.

## Broomhill swimming pool

*Ed*

Thanks to Roy Lobbett with assistance from Paul Beaumont for arranging our use of Broomhill swimming pool during the summer on Wed nights between 7pm and 9pm. Broomhill, which is on Sherington Road just off Norwich Road in Ipswich, is 4.5 m deep which makes it ideal for checking out kit and doing practical exercises. I understand that there is a £2 charge for use. All are encouraged to use it.

## Farne Islands holiday!

*Roy Lobbett*

**[Important Note: The meeting mentioned below has already been held and the first weekend which Roy is organising is fully booked up. If enough people say they want to go then a second weekend is possible. - Ed]**

- \* Seals playing with your fins?
- \* Novices welcome but will be dependent upon enough instructors to cover them.
- \* the odd ship wreck
- \* lots of sea life
- \* expect good visibility -in past well in excess of 20m
- \* target dates end of august; sept or oct
- \* skipper previously used and liked by club -Colin Rutter -awaiting info from him and a response from the club before tentavily setting dates
- \* know of a good fish & chip shop plus the odd pub

Please let me know if you are interested. I will have meeting of interested parties in pub in near future.

## MY FIRST DEEP DIVE

*Olaf Ropil*

**[Just to make sure I have no liability for actions taken as a result of this article please be aware this didn't really happen! - Ed]**

For my first deep dive I planned to something a bit different than just drop to 30m at Horsea. My intention was to travel to somewhere exotic. This required some planning, so first off I purchased my air ticket to America. With the ticket sorted I started to prepare and pack. As I would be taking my own equipment I needed to remove the valves from my cylinders otherwise they wouldn't be allowed on the plane. Having done this with a monkey wrench, brute force and ignorance I stored the tanks in the shed, out of harms way. Next up, I serviced the remainder of my kit, being the first time I have tried this, I decided that a good dose of Castrol on any moving parts would give lasting protection and extend the service intervals accordingly.

With my kit packed and the cylinders under my arm I headed for the airport. Initially they were reluctant to let me take my cylinders onboard, but having removed the spiders and ants etc. they reluctantly agreed. On arrival In the USA I hired a car to look for a dive shop local to my proposed dive site. On arrival I was dismayed to find very few dive centres and felt a general level of unease when explaining why I was there. Eventually I found a dive centre that filled my cylinders, after I refitted my valves, only to find slight leakage on all of them. I removed the valves and refitted them using PTFE tape and a large wrench, this did the trick. After asking around I was surprised that no skippers would take me out and also I was unable to find a buddy, even the Italians wouldn't go. Faced with going alone or cancelling the trip I opted to hire a rib for a day and do a solo dive. This I wasn't that keen on as I had only just passed my open water course and had no boating experience, pedalos excluded.

With the RIB organised and spare fuel aboard I set off for the dive site. This I knew would take a while so I took a good book and an extra pair of thermal socks with me in case it got cold. After many hours I saw a large lump of ice looming up on the starboard side, which I managed to miss....just. This I felt meant I had to be in about the right place, So taking a compass bearing I manoeuvred the boat into position. Dropping the anchor I prepared to kit up.

As this was a solo dive I knew I needed to be very careful and take redundant systems with me. So having attached a pony bottle to my 12 litre cylinder backed up further by my jackets bottle, all 0.5 litres of it, I was sure that if a problem occurred I'd be OK. Kitted up with a couple of torches (good practice on any dive) I donned my fins and prepared to "go diving".

A backward roll, quick check and down the shot line. As I descended I suddenly realised the shot was a bit short, but as there was no currents the boat wasn't drifting, so I continued. While descending I suffered from terrible suit squeeze, which adding air to my suit did little to relieve, but this sense of indestructibility overcame me and I continued to descend. I soon realised this feeling must be those Nicaraguan Narcotics my instructor had been going on about at 30m+.

As I descended further the wreck appeared beneath me. It looked absolutely huge and I was sure that I wouldn't get round it in one dive. As I landed upon the deck I was amazed at the viz. and the odd looking fish etc. surrounding me. With no time to waste I swam through the first opening I came across and down a long corridor, down some steps, up some steps, through this, over that, until I came into this vast room. Swimming through this room I came across a very large staircase and stopped to take in the scene around me, stunning opulence, this must have been some boat. I continued up the stairs and onto the deck, a quick look at my gauges told me I better hurry up, as I'd soon need to use my little pony. A quick hop over the bow and I saw what could have been some writing, a quick rub with the back of my glove, and you could just make out some letters "ITIC" this confirmed I was on the right wreck.

My second check on my gauges confirmed that my pony was low and therefore it was time to ascend, hopefully with enough air for a safety stop. As I finned upwards vigorously I sensed that even the pony was empty, so I cracked my jacket bottle fully open and shot upwards towards the surface. Though I missed my safety stop, the ballistic ascent was fortunate in that when I broke the surface I went so far up that I had a good chance to look around to see where my RIB had gone. After a surface swim of several hours I managed to catch up with my boat and begin making my way back to land, tired but happy.

It is very difficult to type this with just my nose as for some reason the only jacket I get to wear these days has the buckles at the back and the sleeves go behind me as well. I keep asking those men in the white coats to undo it but they won't and the wallpaper, carpet and ceiling in my room are very spongy.....

## DIARY DATES

Subscript article submission deadline

24<sup>th</sup> September

### Events, courses and holidays

Date	Events	Contact
24/25 July '99	Weybourne	John Cook
30 July - 1 August '99	Weybourne	Tracey Skirrow / John Cook
2 <sup>nd</sup> - 5 <sup>th</sup> September	The Farnes	Roy Lobbett
2 <sup>nd</sup> October	Barn Dance	Dave Garrett
1 <sup>st</sup> - 4 <sup>th</sup> ? October	The Farnes	??
5 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> November	The Red Sea (southern Egypt)	Mick Morley