

York Sub Aqua Club Newsletter

April/May 2003 Issue 3

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Chairman's chat

Welcome to the April Edition of Bottom Times. First I would like to say thank you to members of the outgoing committee who did such a good job last year. As I was unable to attend the AGM on Feb 25th, a special thank you goes to Dave Scaife for stepping in and giving a review of events at such short notice.

I would also like to welcome the new committee: in particular the new members. In my opinion, the club is fortunate to have these people give up their time for the club. We have an excellent balance of old and new, male and female, and I have high expectations that our year in office will prove fruitful.

Looking forward, there is a lot going on this year:

- Gary, our D.O. has planned and co-ordinated an exciting programme of trips this year. Many thanks to all who have arranged trips.
- Lots of training, including new members and Skill Development Courses.
- We will be trying to build a garage for the club boat.
- We will be updating our somewhat obsolete constitution – the rules governing the management of the club.
- BSAC's 50th anniversary – for details of our contribution as BSAC Club No. 50, see inside this issue.
- A May Ball is being planned for 17th May. Dance the night away with the one you love. How romantic!

So there is something for everyone. Please try to support all the events. Remember you can make it happen. Don't run the risk of disappointment by missing out.

Here's to a safe and enjoyable 2003!

Yours in diving,
Ian.

The New Committee

Chairman:	Ian Salmons
Diving Officer:	Gary Cameron
Treasurer:	Ian Hodgkinson
Secretary:	Sue Tuckett
Equipment:	Dave Blackburn

Members:
Vicki Adams (Social Events)
Nick Eden
Cathy Moore (Press and Publicity)

Inside this Issue

- The first dives of the season - the DO reports
- BSAC 50th Anniversary
- Brian Goddard leads us on a dive of the Britannia
- Announcing this year's chairman's dinner: the May Ball

The Diving Officer Reports...

Since the beginning of January we have had 12 club dive trips, most of which so far have been training dives at Capernwray. We have amassed 150 person dives so far. We have also had club dives to the Lake District and Farne Islands. I now have a record of each club dive that has taken place, so please make sure that trips and dives are notified to me. Either on Dive Marshall sheets or by email. At the end of the year the Ocean Diver or Sport Diver with the most club dives will be awarded the Wet of the Year. So far one of our trainees has been on just about every club dive, so is a high contender. But I won't give any names away yet.

The 2003 season kicked off on the 18th January with 3 club members attending the BSAC Instructor Foundation Course at Leeds. The same weekend saw Saturday and Sunday trips to Capernwray.

Capernwray

We have had 7 day trips to Capernwray so far, with most of our trainees who started open water training in January now having reached or about to reach the new Ocean Diver grade. The weather this year has been extremely kind to us with some very sunny training days indeed.

Lake District

A club dive to the Lake District was organised for the weekend of 5th and 6th of April. The dive was posted on the board, and all those who signed up to the dive met at Coniston Water at 8:30am. The morning was beautiful sunshine and the lake was flat calm. The water round the edge of the lake looked like gin. This dive was picked with the objective of teaching our trainees the importance of maintaining good buoyancy or else suffer the consequences. Duly the Dive Leaders briefed their trainees. But I am not sure they listened as they had to cope with very low viz and dark diving. Maybe next time?

After a spot of lunch in Coniston Village, we moved on to the infamous Hodge Close..



Hodge Close is an altitude dive which requires a higher than normal level of dive fitness. We arrived on site to survey the situation and after standing perplexed in the car park the DO eventually pointed out a very small hole in the hillside leading to a flooded tunnel. Yes – that was the way to the dive site! Putting our suits on we then waded through the 60 metre water filled tunnel, into a large cavern and down a 12 foot ladder to a scree slope. All dives were completed successfully in Hodge Close, and we even managed some training.

Hodge Close – "You don't really mean it???" "Oh, you do!"



Some of the team had signed up for the Saturday and headed for York. 4 of us left had signed up for the Sunday too so we headed for Ambleside where we had booked accommodation in the Ambleside Backpackers: clean comfortable and only £15 per night. Also, very important to a dive party, there was no curfew. After a well deserved shower, we disappeared down into Ambleside for refreshments and provisions for breakfast. Following a bit of a noisy night (not us!) we were up for breakfast.

A typical diver's breakfast - the DO's job is never done!

Dive site No 3, Wastwater, is rather remote even as a Lake District site. We had to drive over the 3:1 gradient of Hardknott pass, a feat in its own right, but eventually arrived at the lakes edge. We found our spot only to find another dive club finishing off. They had one of their divers taken to hospital because she had had a free flow but held her breath on the ascent. It was not really what we were wanting to hear before we attempted a site that had claimed many divers before. The dive site has an easy entry, shingle shore and a line running a couple of metres off the bottom out to the pinnacles.



The line runs over very silty bottom and any movement or agitation sends a cloud up. finally you arrive at the pinnacles which is rocky outcrop at the end. The pinnacles has many plaques screwed to it with messages to long gone divers. Again a bit unnerving. Over the pinnacles there is a sheer rock face or wall that descends to 40-50 metres and then on to 70+ We dived to about 38 metres and were surprised that a torch was not required. The average viz being about 12-14 metres. Wastwater is an excellent site to prepare people for some deep cold water clear diving. But is not to be underestimated.

Kitting up at Wastwater – the deepest Lake in England

The Farnes

A club trip to the Farne Islands was organised for the Easter Bank Holiday. The normal campsite at Beadnell was not open for the break this year. So we had to organise a new camping venue which turned out to be Waren Mill Camping site. It took a little longer to get to Seahouses from Waren Mill but the campsite was good with an on site bar.

4 Private boats had decided to go this weekend and were willing to take on a fresh crop of trainees. As we couldn't find a cox for the club boat for the whole weekend thanks go to Brian Goddard on *B-Good*, Ian Salmons on *Diversions*, Jon and Debbie Da'Luz Vieira on *Easy Life* and Gary Cameron on the newly christened *Sugar Free* for taking us all out.

The first dive "Back of Longstone" was fairly dark for the Farnes. But it was a good introduction for those whose first sea dive it was. "Well it can only get better" we all thought, although it has to be said that the weather was fairly good.

2nd dive was on the south side of Crumstone/Fang Reef. Again the viz was not too good, the seals stayed on the surface and the water was a bracing 7degC. Still it was good practice for the trainees to perfect their boat entries and exits and nice for all of us to be in the sea again.

Saturday saw us sheltering around the Back of Harcar for another low viz meander along a small wall where the most interesting sights were a sunstar and some minute squat lobsters. With the weather getting worse and the wind freshening we had an interesting trip back to the harbour, especially for an overloaded *Diversions*, and we decided to call it a day. Sunday and Monday were both blown out so in the end we only got 3 dives over 4 days. However it was a good relaxing 4 days and hopefully the sea can only improve.

Congratulations to Geoff Steel and Dave Blackburn, who qualified as Ocean Divers after their dives this weekend!

BSAC 50th Anniversary Celebrations – 50 Divers on the Ouse!

In order to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the British Sub Aqua Club our Branch, which happens to be Branch Number 50, agreed at a special meeting held last month, to organise a day of celebration on 27th September. Our aim? 50 divers on the River Ouse!

The club rib together with at least 4 privately owned ribs are going to be taking part, so don't worry if you don't fancy immersing yourself in the muddy water – you can sit in comfort on one of the boats! It's worth bearing in mind though, that many of the club's current divers wouldn't be qualified today if it wasn't for diving in the river – not for them the centrally heated comfort of Capernwray – all training used to take place in the Ouse.

The day is being organised by Gary Cameron and Vicki Adams, and after an initial negative response from British Waterways, they have since had a change of heart and agreed to give us full backing, including a safety boat.

We hope to make it a spectacle that friends, family and members of the public can enjoy from the river bank and we would also like to invite any former members of the club who are still diving to come back to York for the day and join us. So if you know anybody who would be interested, and to indicate that you would like to take part, please contact Gary or Vicki.

As an added incentive to take part, and to round the day off in style, a riverboat cruise is planned for the evening.

Brian Goddard kicks off a series in which members of the club describe favourite dives – some you'll know, some you won't be able to wait to discover...

The Britannia

The Crumstone is the most Easterly of the reefs which make up the Farne Islands, consisting of two rock outcrops visible at all states of the tide. To the West of the Crumstone lay the Callers, four pinnacles of granite that break the surface at low water. At other states of the tide they lay in wait below the surface to spear the hulls of unsuspecting boats.

In 1915 the steam ship SS Britannia ran onto the Callers in fog. Today the wreck can be found scattered down the Southern slope of the West end of the Callers.

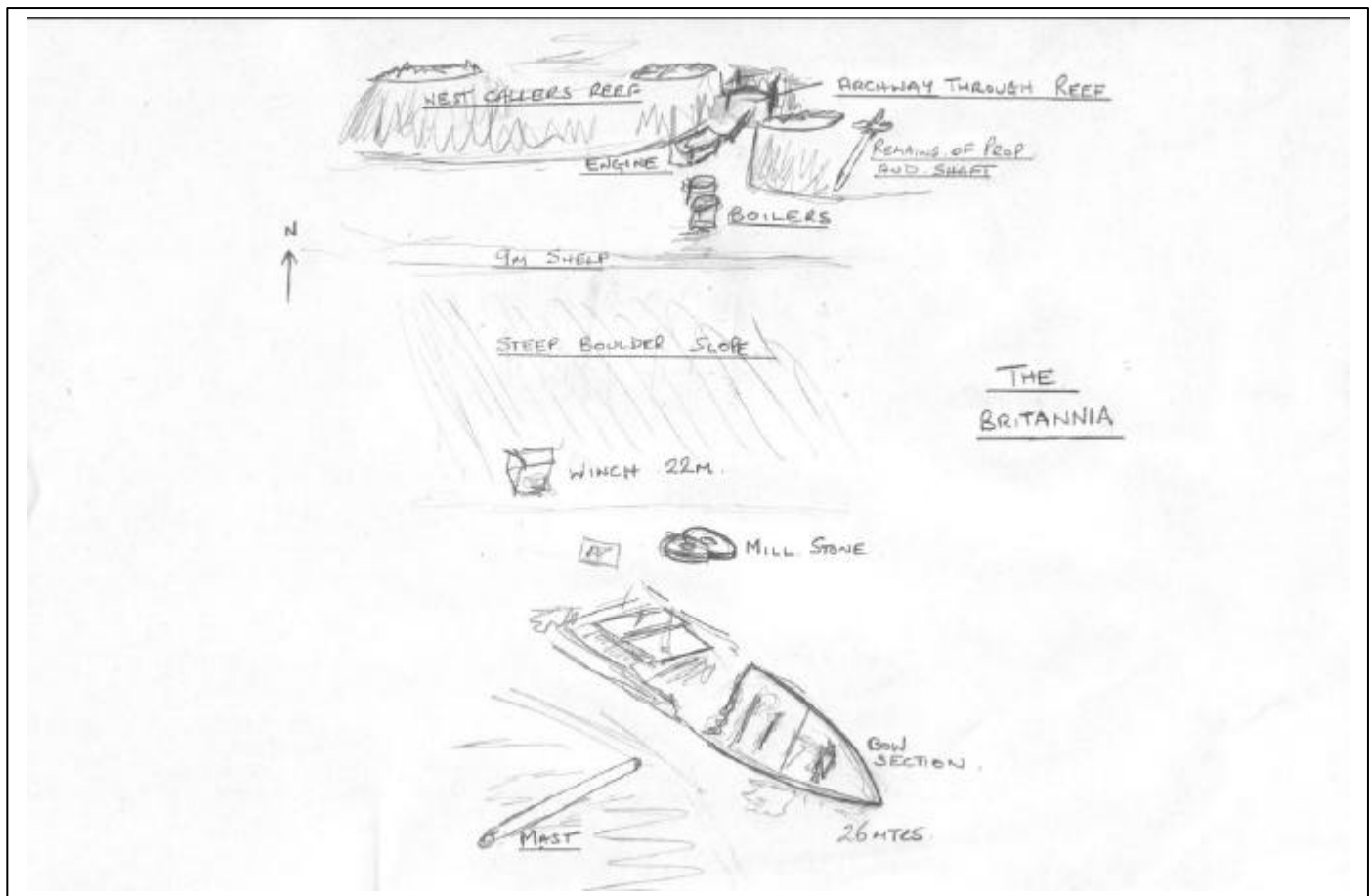
Currents are vicious around the reef, a momentary lapse in concentration on behalf of the boat Cox can soon result in the boat being pulled onto the reef and anchoring close to the reef requires care. It is best to dive this wreck at low water slack. This occurs approximately two hours after low water Seahouses.

It is possible to find the bow section of the wreck in 26 metres using the echo sounder and anchor direct into the wreckage. An alternative is to anchor on the shelf above the wreck to allow divers to investigate the whole wreck and ascend the anchor line. The main section of wreckage can be found at the bottom of a steep boulder slope. A large winch marks the top of the main wreck site with large plates and steel sections leading down to the bow section which is laid over on its starboard side and stands about five metres clear of the shingle bottom. The bow is the deepest and most southerly part of the wreck. Swimming back up the wreckage a large mast can be found running out along the bottom in a Westerly direction. The mast is hollow and often the haven for a variety of marine creatures. At the top of the wreckage just below the winch and to the East lay two large round millstones. This part of the wreck is frequented by shoals of fish and provides a very atmospheric dive.

Explore the bows until your bottom time is almost gone then swim north up the boulder slope past the winch. The slope finishes at a Kelp covered shelf in nine metres where you can use the rest of your air. Bits of wreckage are strewn about the seabed among the Kelp. Swim across the shelf that is approximately twenty-five metres wide and you will find the boiler, stood on its end, at the base of the reef wall. Swim past the boiler into the gully formed by the reef walls and you will find the engine laid over on its side. Carry on past the engine, the gully narrows and ends in a large archway that passes all the way through to the North side of the reef. This is a favourite spot for seals to sleep and play. I have swum through this arch on a number of occasions with up to a dozen seals diving down through the arch. At the same time I have also found seals apparently asleep on the seabed under the arch. On one occasion one such seal refused to wake up even when we swam over it. I began to think it may be dead but it finally woke up as we returned through the arch and lazily slid away to the surface as we approached. The shallow depth allows plenty of bottom time to enjoy this beautiful part of the reef, but all too soon it is time to ascend.

Swim away from the reef across the shelf to the South and ascend the anchor line if you are able to regain it. If not ascend when the edge of the shelf is reached. This will give the boat room to manoeuvre when picking you up.

This is a great dive that requires good weather conditions and slack water. The boilers, engine and archway provide for a shallow dive suitable for novices with the bow section providing a challenge for the more experienced.



Our Next Social Event – a date for your diaries – not to be missed!

**The May Ball - a 3 course dinner and disco
Lady Anne Middleton's Hotel
Saturday 17th May £24**

Sample menu includes a choice of

Cream of Leek and White Wine Soup
Strawberry and Mango Medley in Malibu
Chef's Pate
Julienne of gammon and green peppers

Marinated Rump steak with a rich cream sauce
Roasted Cod with Grain Mustard in a mushroom sauce
Poached Chicken Breast with garlic in a whisky chive sauce
Mushroom Risotto

**Don't miss out – contact Vicki Adams to secure your ticket!
01904 632218**