

York Sub Aqua Club Newsletter

July / Aug 2003 Issue 4

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Chairman's chat

I want to start by saying how pleasing it was to see the club boat out on the open sea once more. It was given its first outing of 2003 on the club trip to the Tyne. Sincere thanks go to our stalwart Equipment Officer, Dave Blackburn for getting her ready and towing her to South Shields.

Diving wise, all the trips programmed for the early part of the season have gone ahead as planned. The trips to the Farne Islands have suffered most from adverse weather conditions, but I am told that the Spring Bank Holiday weekend was brilliant. The Easter expedition was limited to 3 dives out of the 8 possible. In compensation, we have found an excellent campsite at Waren Mill. A bar on site with a great pint of Tetley's at only £1.85. Ah heaven!

The E.G.M. held to discuss changes to the constitution was only just made quorate by dragging Richard Young into the meeting after he finished his Ocean Diver exam. The proposed changes to the constitution were passed. Minutes of the meeting are available from the secretary, if you have not already received them via email.

Looking to the rest of the season, there is still plenty of diving to be done. I must say I am envious of those lucky divers who are fortunate enough to be going across the Channel to Normandy. It is my recollection that the vis is outstanding, but the tides are enormous. The start of your week is on spring tides, so take care, everyone. I will think of you as I tuck into my plat de fruits de mer in St Malo. (Jill and I are going cycling in Brittany again).

Mull, St Abbs, Red Sea, Gozo, Truk Lagoon..... Can it get any better?

Yours in diving, Ian

The Club Boat rides again!



Inside this Issue

- BSAC 50th Anniversary arrangements and party!
- Trip reports from Plymouth, Clyde, Cote D'Azur, Tyne.
- Pond clearing
- Seasearch

The Committee Reports...

BSAC 50th Anniversary Celebrations – 27th September

Gary has been hard at work negotiating with the British Waterways Authority and YorkBoat to get 50 divers on the River Ouse for the BSAC anniversary celebrations, and we are pleased to report that the day is shaping up. We have permission to rope off the river in a triangle going from the first pillar of the Ouse Bridge back to the quayside on either side of the bridge – an area which includes the Kings Arms on one side and back to around Yates Wine Lodge on the other.

The Kings Arms have agreed to display a poster advertising the event, which will also be publicised in the local press. We will have display boards on Kings Staithe advertising the club, informing people about Scuba Diving and inviting them to sign up for try dives. We are also hoping to have a megaphone to tell people what is going on in the water, where, between 1pm and 3pm we will have 5 ribs and 50 divers. Former members of the club are being contacted, thanks to some of our older members who have provided old branch lists. Their reminiscences should add greatly to the atmosphere of the day. If you have any lists of former members, please let Cathy know.

***Contact Gary to sign up for the anniversary event 1pm to 3pm
Kings Staithe Saturday 27th September.***

To round the day off there will be a river boat cruise on one of the YorkCruise boats. This leaves Kings Staithe at 7.30 for a three hour continuous cruise, before returning us back to the centre of town. The price of £14.95 includes a buffet, and we will be providing our own music – get those party tapes dusted off!

Contact Vicki to reserve your place on the

***Riverboat Cruise
7.30pm – 10.30pm Saturday 27th September
Dance the night away under the stars!***

PLYMOUTH GIN – Spring Bank Holiday 2003 – Ian Salmons reports...

The portents were not good when Brian had to pull out of the trip, due to family reasons. Be Good would not be going. That would leave only one boat, Diversion, under the command of someone whose sun was definitely dipping below the yardarm!

The intrepid trio of Geoff “Nerves Of” Steel, Cathy “Just One” Moore and Dave “I’m a Wreck(ie)” Blackburn didn’t jump ship when given chance. Purser Jill was in charge shore side. So when I won the club raffle of 10 bottles of lager the signs were that we were bound for success, or Plymouth at the very least.

It was in every sense a team effort. Geoff provided bed and board in his camper van. Dave towed the boat there and back with his Mitsubishi and Cathy researched the dive sites, tides, checked the local facilities and made a gorgeous lasagne for dinner on Friday evening. Jill did a sterling job, supplying us with food and drink, and getting fuel from Safeway, saving 15p/litre on the Marina price. She took time from her holiday relaxation to meet us at Bovisand with our second cylinders, so huge thanks are in order.

We launched Diversion from the Mountbatten Centre, a fairly new diving and watersport facility, on the south side of the Cattewater, in Plymouth Harbour. Once launched, the RIB was left in complete security, moored to a pontoon for the whole of the week-end. Taking the rib out through Plymouth sound every morning made a lovely start to the day – fine views of the old town and plenty of shipping of all sizes to navigate around.



James Egan Layne: 22m

Our first dive was on the wreck of the James Egan Layne, a World War II liberty ship. It is located just along the Cornwall coast from Plymouth, in Whitesand Bay. There were no prizes given for wreck location. As we rounded the headland, we saw an Armada of hardboats and ribs, jostling for position over the marker buoy. Plates have fallen off, but never the less, it is still impressive and more importantly, still recognisable as a ship instead of a heap of scrap metal.

S.S. Persier: 30m

It has to be acknowledged that the description of the wreck and more importantly the transits given in Dive magazine are spot on. We were first on the wreck, with only one hardboat in sight. By the time we had anchored in and got our first pair ready there were three more hardboats and seven ribs there. Geoff and me had a good dive, but unfortunately we went the wrong way from the boilers, onto the scrapyards that forms the forward part of the wreck. Cathy and Dave went to the stern, and managed to swim

through the propeller shaft tunnel that forms a feature of this wreck. Again, good vis on the wreck.

Hands Deep and Eddystone lighthouse

What can I say about the stupendous Hands Deep. It's a reef, rising to 7m below the surface, some 10 miles from the coast. The water was gin clear and the marine life had to be witnessed to really appreciate it. Even dedicated wreckie Dave had to admit that it was most impressive. For our second dive, the lure of diving off Eddystone proved too much, even though with the wind freshening it would have been more sensible to do another dive off Hands Deep. The wind and tide were against us, so we had to anchor in on the north side of the reef. This was not the better side. Cathy and Geoff fought the current for a bit before giving up. Dave and I free dived it. We were on a plateau at 20m for ages, with a kelp cover sea bed. I have never seen kelp growing at that depth in such profusion before. Eventually we got a bit more depth, and had a good dive in gin clear vis. A long cruise home to our base in rapidly deteriorating weather conditions made for extra interest. Warships that had just returned home from the war in the Gulf kept looming out of the mist. Most eerie.

I think that we all enjoyed our weekends diving, and we got on really well together. Plymouth has a lot to offer for divers. If there is a down side it is that the popular wrecks and reefs are just too popular.

Fog on the Tyne is all mine, all mine.... Geoff Steel reports

Diving in South Shields on 21st June was planned as a simple one day event but like topsy it developed a mind of it's own. The list became full almost immediately it went on the board and somewhere along the road it also became a weekend

Everyone arrived as expected in South Shields on a bright sunny day, despite worries all week that the weather forecast was not good. The sea was as flat as it gets. Out to sea with three ribs and thirteen divers. The club rib managed its first outing this year after Dave and Pete had polished and prodded it over the previous week to ensure that everything was in good working order.

The first dive was on the Pandora, which was a submarine supply ship. There are large pieces of the wreck still intact and lots of large fish. The depth was about 25 metres and the visibility much better than anyone had expected

The afternoon wreck was two in one. This is the Eugenia Chandris, which lies on top of the Oslofjord. The depth is around 15 metres max. The site is huge and with being two ships it is not easy establishing what is what. Most of us enjoyed the sight of huge boilers and engines while some of us found live bullets lying around – the remains of the cargo of the Eugenia Chandris. This is an interesting rummage dive, as every year the tides shift the sands in the bay and new bits of wreckage are revealed.

Back to the harbour about 5.30 now wondering if we could get a fill for Sunday. All 24 tanks were piled into 3 cars and rushed off to the dive shop. We arrived at 5.55 as it shut at 6.00. The owner, Bob Scullion, was really brilliant and filled all the tanks without

complaint, showing us videos of various deep dives to largely unexplored wrecks as we waited.

Saturday night In South Shields is supposed to be a hair-raising event but we managed to avoid the hen parties (or rather, some of us couldn't find them!) We did find a good pub followed by an Indian meal with everyone in good spirits.

Sunday seemed not quite as good, but we didn't realise how bad it was until we poked our heads out of the harbour. We were prepared to brave the lashing rain, thunder and lightning, but a huge swell had blown up overnight and diving was not on.

A brilliant weekend with much better diving than some of us expected. All those who went I'm sure will go again.



Sue Tuckett and Gary Cameron experience Cote D'Azur Diving

The advent of cheap flights to a variety of European Centres now makes getting away for a short diving holiday in warmer water a more realistic proposition for those of us living in the frozen north! Having read about the attractions of diving a sub called the Rubis off the French Mediterranean Coast, we booked a cheap (and not just because it was Friday 13th June!) flight with Jet2 from Leeds Bradford and arrived at Cote D'Azur Diving around 2.30pm local time. We had taken a hire car from Nice airport to Port Grimaud, where the diving centre is located.

John Clark, a Brit who runs the dive centre (BSAC and PADI), and charters a 7m rib called Rumbo, put together a 5 dive pack for us diving 4 wrecks, with a lovely scenic reef to finish off on the last morning (even Gary enjoyed it – not too many fish in the way!)

The first dive was the Espingole, a French Destroyer in 40m. Fairly broken up but with massive engines standing proud of the sea bed. Impressive Moray and Conger eels hide in the wreckage and Scorpion Fish await the unwary diver! Visibility was a good 15 – 20 metres and current is virtually non-existent (by UK standards!) The second dive of the first

day was Le Prophete, a 19th century sail and steam powered cargo vessel. This was a beautiful dive – once again a fairly broken wreck but one huge fly wheel stands several feet high creating a very atmospheric feel and the perfect home for a massive Grouper!

The next morning saw us off to the Rubis. This WW2 sub was sunk deliberately in 1956 and lies completely intact at 42m. The whole 66m vessel is visible from 17m down the shot line and is a truly amazing sight. There is not much growth on the submarine - couple this with the completeness of the wreck and you get the feeling that she might move off at any moment! Close to the conning tower is a small oval porthole with glass still in place (no crowbars allowed in France!) A small hatch lies open on the top but entry is not recommended, not least because the wreck is home to several large Moray and Conger Eels. As on the previous dives schools of Red Mullet hung almost motionless around the structure and seemed oblivious to the 15 or so divers disturbing their tranquillity. Yes – there were other boats on the site so unfortunately we did not have this magnificent wreck to ourselves – maybe next time!

Rubis when she was built....



After a second dive on Le Relax, a small steel cargo boat, we sailed into port sipping vin rosé from plastic cups as the rich and famous on their million dollar yachts looked on with envy!

Rubis today...



Flying on Tuesday morning meant only one dive on Monday and not too deep. So we motored out to the entrance to the Golf du St Tropez and dived L'Arche. This is a varied reef covered in all types of vegetation and life – lobsters, crabs, schools of small coley and the odd grouper. A relaxing and peaceful end to a fantastic short break. Worth the effort for the Rubis alone but I would love to go back and explore further – anyone interested?

Donald where's your trousers? York divers venture over the border...

...to experience diving some of the Clyde wrecks on a sunny weekend in June. Gary had booked a hardboat, the Clutha, and Sue had seemingly achieved the impossible – accommodation to cater for everyone: campsite, B&B and somewhere for Geoff's motor home, all on one farm.

Sailing from Inverkip, the Clutha had been fitted out as a dive boat by the captain, Eileen, herself a diver, and she seemed to have thought of everything – a spacious kitting up area, clean toilet, and best of all, hot home made soup after each dive!



The diving started on the Greenock, a bucket dredger, sunk in 1902. This is a small wreck and felt quite crowded when we were all on it. It was pretty dark and silty but we all managed to see the row of buckets still attached, running down the middle of the ship. The afternoon dive was voted the best – MV Akka, a cargo ship sunk in 1956 and the largest diveable wreck in the Firth of Clyde. This wreck is totally covered in life – dead men's fingers, anemones, and sea squirts cling to every surface and some places had so many brittle stars that the whole wreck looked as though it was writhing. With a bit a current and such a large ship, it was difficult to see everything .

After a night out in Largs at a lovely restaurant recommended by Eileen and some shenanigans with the B&B keys we were eager to go. Our first dive was on the Wallachia, a steamer which now lies at about 27m, with the bottom at 34m and has a cargo of beer and whisky, still waiting to be recovered. Descending the shot, we were in complete darkness from 20m. And that's all I can say about this wreck – the shot had moved, we were dumped on a muddy bottom and Sue and I unfortunately went the wrong way. Mind you, no one did manage to find that beer!

By unanimous vote we chose the MV Akka again for our second dive, as there was still so much to see. I think we would all go back, especially to the Clutha, where we were so well looked after.

Cathy Moore

Other News...

York divers help local community

Bernard Wilding and ex-member John White recently came to the aid of the New Earswick Village Committee and the Rowntrees Trust by helping to survey the New Earswick Pond, ready for the open day of the nature reserve at the end of June. Bernard, along with other divers from the club, did the initial survey on the pond when the nature reserve opened in 1978. They recorded depths and cleared water lilies so that fishermen could have easier access. A plaque at the site records the involvement of the club. This time round the divers were happy to report healthy stocks of carp, roach, perch and pike. The village committee said a big thank you to John and Bernard for their help.

New Earswick residents enjoy the open day



Seasearch

Geoff, Dave Blackburn and new member Hillary, recently attended a course to teach divers about the UK Seasearch 2003 initiative. This is a project, reported in this month's *Dive*, to get recreational divers involved in a mass survey to record marine species and habitats throughout the UK.

Seasearch is supported by BSAC, and Geoff reported that the course was very good at helping you recognise what you see in the sea. Even dedicated wreckie Dave found that it increased his enjoyment of a recent Farnes trip.

For further information see Geoff, Dave or Hillary.