

York Sub Aqua Club Newsletter

Oct 2003 Issue 5

Happy Anniversary BSAC!



Club Members on the River Ouse celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the British Sub Aqua Club on Saturday 27th September.

Plans were all in hand to put 50 divers in the river when British Waterways pulled the plug on the event just two weeks before it was due to happen. Despite our disappointment, it was decided to go ahead with a "Birthday Parade" from Naburn to the Kings Arms, and those who took part thoroughly enjoyed the day, not least because of the brilliant sunshine.

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...50th Celebrations report continued

The evening riverboat do was voted a great success, with a full boatload cruising up the Ouse, floodlights blazing onto the banks.

A change of plans for the day perhaps, but we still achieved our stated aim of putting "50 divers on the River Ouse"

And best of all there has been an unexpected bonus, revealed just as we were finishing off this issue:

York Sub Aqua Club has won 2nd prize in the BSAC national competition to find the most original way of celebrating the 50th anniversary!

The club will be presented with two full sets of kit at the Dive Show in Birmingham in November. The kit comprises Beuchat Masterlift Evolution BCs, Beuchat VS3 regulators, Beuchat VS octopuses, Typhoon masks and snorkels and Typhoon Tornado fins.

Thanks to everyone who helped to make the day such a success!

York Sub Aqua Club Christmas Do

Back by popular demand...

Buffet and Dancing at the Willow Restaurant, Coney Street on Saturday 20th December 8pm

Only £12.95 per person for meal and disco

To secure your place, please let Vicki have the full amount by the end of November

Chairman's Chat

Unless a few hardy souls are going to venture out later this month, it seems that the diving season for diving in UK waters has come to an end. Still, we have packed an awful lot of diving in this year – much more than I can recall for quite some time – and the weather has only beaten us on a few occasions. At the time of writing, we still have the boat handling course at Whitby to look forward to, and some divers have plans to dive in the Red Sea. And of course there are still other courses to go on, and the lifesaving exam is rapidly approaching. Thanks to Gary for arranging them.

I must say that I was pleased with the turn out on the River Ouse on the 27th September and I am sure that everyone who took part enjoyed the event. Well done to Cathy and Sue for organizing the balloons, decorations and posters for the boats and all their efforts to make the day a success. Thanks to Dave for getting the club boat onto the water and to Dave, Jon and Drew for getting it started. The boats were quite an impressive sight.

The publicity that went with it is beginning to show rewards. We have had quite a lot of enquiries and several participants on 'Come and try it' dives. We may get more members by this means.

Thanks also to Vicky for the evening river cruise. It was a novel event for the club, and one that went down well. It was great to see some old familiar faces and catch up with old times.

Talking of which, again as a result of the article in the Evening Press, a chap called Bill Tomlinson got in touch with me. He was a member of the club in the early 60s and in fact held the post of DO for a number of years. He rescued the club's minute book from the rising flood-waters when the clubhouse on Butcher Terrace was in danger of being inundated, as happened so often. He was most anxious to return the book to the club, which he did at the Committee Meeting on Thursday 2 October. Bernard and Dennis came along and spent the evening reminiscing about old times.



I'm sure that you will all join with me in wishing Ian good luck with his operation scheduled for later this month. Hope everything goes well, Ian, and you make a speedy recovery.

Yours in diving
Ian

Ian Salmons reports from the highlands Mull Over This...

Actually there is a serious matter to mull over. That is when are we going again. Those divers fortunate enough to be on the trip will take all of a nanosecond to decide that they will go again as soon as the opportunity presents itself. Hopefully Leo will be organizing next year's trip.

So what of this year's trip? Well to start off with, Mark and Hannah of Northern Light have replaced the Chalice and Poplar Diver with an ex-Norwegian Fisheries Support Vessel called **Hjalmar Bjorge**. (Pronounced halmar byorge as near enough and shortened to H Bj). It is 22.85m long – that is about 1m longer than the Chalice, and is fully equipped to take 12 divers in total comfort. It scores over the Chalice in that there is no forward saloon, so there is plenty of deck space in front of the bridge for divers to kit up. Also the hull isn't quite as high, so the climb out of the water at the end of a dive is not as arduous. The twin berth cabins are all roomy and comfortable and there is plenty of space in the dining room. As usual, Mark employs an excellent cook, and this year Heather proved to be the best yet. Rachel, the deck hand, is a talented singer and musician and entertained us one evening.

This trip's contingents were Leo and Emma, Paul, Dave Baino, Ian H, Pete D and his brother in law's son Mick, Debbie J, Janet, Hilary and me. We met in Oban at 4-00 on Friday afternoon, and sailed up the Sound of Mull to stay overnight at Tobermory. After dinner there was time to visit the Mishnish and try a new pub called McGew's. Saturday saw us leave the sound and head across to the north end of Coll to dive on the wreck of the **Nevada II**. It was sunny and shafts of sunlight penetrated the wreck, giving a quite ethereal feel to the dive. The wreck swarmed with life.

Mark took us along the Atlantic coast of Coll, somewhere where I have never been before, and through the channel between Coll and Tyree for our next dive on the wreck of the **Tapti**, on the south east of Coll. Everyone enjoyed a great dive on this wreck.

Next came the absolute highlight of the trip! As we made our way to the ferry terminal at Arinagour, we sighted a number of basking sharks. These huge fish were not intimidated by the presence of the ship, and Mark was able to keep them within camera range for over an hour. They swam just under the bows on a few occasions, so everyone was snapping away. Three intrepid divers who had underwater cameras even tried to snorkel up to them, only to find that despite the creature's apparent slow easy movement through the water, they could swim quite quickly.



Mark did a deal with a trawler skipper who was moored alongside at the ferry terminal – Cans of lager for a huge bag of Dublin Bay prawns. Paul was just about to open a can when Mark whipped it away from him, but his sacrifice was well worth it. Prawns with everything for the rest of the trip. That evening we had a trip ashore to sample brews in the local hotel, the Royal.

The wind got up a bit next day, so we settled for a scenic dive at **Ardmour Bay** and got a few scallops. In the afternoon a slack(ish) water dive on the **Hispania**. The old girl is leaning over more and more onto her starboard side, but is still a tremendous dive. Next day saw us dive on the **Rondo**, depth merchant Debbie recording the deepest dive with her buddy Janet. The afternoon dive was on the **Thesis**, a wreck that I always enjoy diving on, and a chance to add to our scallop collection. A beautiful sunny evening was spent in Lochaline.

Janet had torn the boot on her dry suit and we all had to admire her efforts in effecting a temporary repair so she would not miss the last dive. She got a load of duck tape and a puncture repair kit from the village store in Lochaline, and some aqua-tape and adhesive from the dive store. It worked, to the amazement of all! Watch out, Diver's Warehouse, you have serious competition!

Tuesday morning saw us cruising down the sound to dive on the **Breda** and all too soon we were heading back to berth in Oban and to say farewell to Mark, Heather and Rachel. Thanks to Leo for organizing the trip - everyone had a thoroughly enjoyable time and we are all looking forwards to our next trip.

Cathy Moore reports from Normandy French Leave - Vive La Difference!

A club dive to the D-Day Normandy Wrecks where we didn't set foot in France and ended up coming home with all the Euros we left with? What's going on? Our week long August liveaboard was not the trip we all expected, and gave rise to some mixed feelings among those who went.

Our party consisted of teckie twinset divers Gary and Nick; old timers Brian and Geoff; intrepid father and daughter team Leo and Emma; first in, last out Gilly and Skelly; the ever glamorous Sue and Cathy and poor old sickie Ian Hodgy with his ever-patient (well, most of the time) buddy, Paul. One thing we were all agreed on was the boat. The *Maureen of Dart* has got a good reputation as a liveaboard, but we all felt there were some serious problems with her. Firstly there just isn't enough space for 12 divers: kitting up was manageable, but sleeping accommodation was scruffy and severely cramped and there wasn't enough space for us all to sit comfortably, which became a real issue when we were stuck on the boat for the first three days with no shore leave. Food was good and plentiful but getting access to hot drinks and water was difficult, which when we were all doing two deep dives again is unforgivable. Skipper Mike, his wife Penny and son Giles seemed initially extremely unfriendly and despites Mike's skill at dropping us spot on the wrecks, they certainly did not seem to be intent on making sure we had a pleasant time.

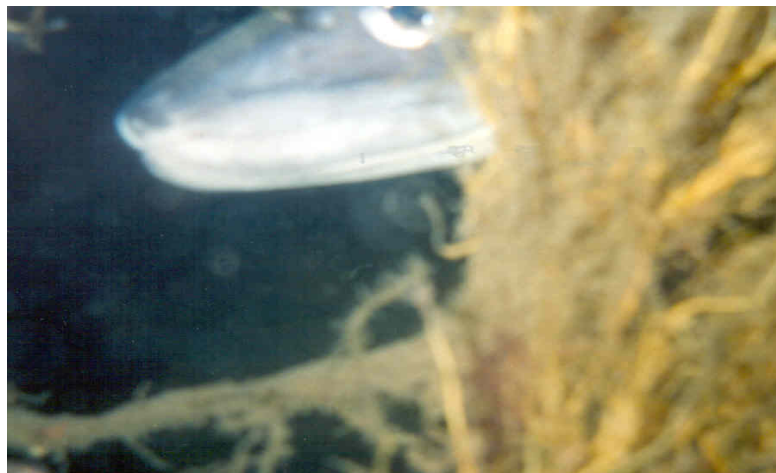
The second problem was the diving. Despite enjoying excellent weather, the visibility was extremely disappointing – down to only a couple of metres at times, which made it difficult to fully appreciate the wrecks we were diving on. We spent the first day off the Cherbourg peninsula diving firstly on a German Tug, the *Pilkoppen*, then a first World War cargo ship,

the *SS Ussa*. Unable to go into harbour because we needed to catch the tide, we made our way round to the Baie de Seine – scene of the Normandy Landings, for the second day.

The morning dive took place on the *USS Carbonelle* (LST 523), despite the angry hostility of two French fishermen who threatened to kill us rather than let us dive for an hour where they happened to be fishing. Luckily they chickened out and so we saw our first D-Day wreck – a landing ship that sank along with the tanks it was transporting, which are still there to be seen today. Our afternoon dive was on passenger liner turned troop transporter, the *Susan B Anthony*. We enjoyed the best visibility so far and despite being broken up the ship was enormous, with holds you could get into, guns still in place and teak decking covered in daisy anemones catching the afternoon sun. Things were looking up we thought, but unfortunately Mike announced that North-Easterlies were forecast which would put paid to any further diving off the Normandy beaches. He suggested heading across to the Channel Isles and resigning ourselves to another night with no shore leave we reluctantly agreed.

So we waved goodbye to France, without ever having set foot on shore. A relief to some of us, who were slightly nervous in case those fishermen and their mates were waiting for us in port. The rest of the week was spent diving German wrecks that had been sunk by the RAF, which was an interesting contrast and although the vis was still pretty bad, we at least got shore leave in St Helier and Herm.

And it was here that the second big controversy of the trip came to a head: Conger Eels, shy magnificent beasts or ferocious killers?



Take a look at this one trying to stay out of the limelight and tell me he's not a cute little thing (only 2m long) who deserves to be left to enjoy his homely hole on the wreck in peace? Not according to two of our party, who shall remain nameless, who were spotted on one particular occasion tooled up with some lead piping determined to punish the eels "for being spooky". Luckily the eels sat tight in their holes and managed to avoid injury, continuing to be a regular and charming feature of all the dives.

We saved the best dive until we were on our way home – a stop off on mid channel wreck the *Muree*. This was everyone's favourite dive, and my best dive ever. The scene was set by watching a video of a 999 Rescue programme which had featured the *Muree*. This enormous cargo ship sank in 1989 after running into difficulties in a force 7 gale. Despite

the coastguard's repeated requests the captain refused to issue a MayDay, the reason for this becoming clear when the Royal Navy eventually started winching people off only to discover that as well as the crew there were women and children on board – far more people than they had bargained for. A dramatic rescue ensued, which almost ended in disaster for two of the Navy rescuers, who were left on board until the ship suddenly started sinking leaving them with no option but to jump 30m into the churning sea. By a miracle they survived and appeared on the programme to tell their tale. Just an hour later we were diving on her. The superstructure of the deck goes down from 38m, and descends to the cargo deck way below our reach at 70m. We had time to fin gently round some of the different levels of decking in fantastic vis, with even some sunlight managing to filter down. And then the best bit – a swim in a swimming pool at 46m beneath the sea. Obviously a luxury vessel in its time! Care is needed as the wreck is covered in monofilament fishing line, but we all safely returned to the shot watched over by Mike on his trimix rebreather.

A perfect end to a mixed trip – we all enjoyed the weather and the company, but only some of us enjoyed the diving and none of us would recommend the *Maureen*.

St Abbs – 6th and 7th September – Sue Tuckett reports

As a fantastic diving season was drawing to a close we packed our kit once again for the last planned club dive of the year. Off up the A1 to St Abbs for 2 days hard boat diving with Billy Aitchison on board MV Lady Gail. The forecast was mixed but yet again, we were blessed with perfect conditions, sun, light breezes and viz to die for!

The en-suite bunk-house at the back of the skippers house proved to be much more luxurious than the 6 of us booked in there had expected. All the comforts of home on the inside and outside, a sunny patio overlooking the harbour where we sat and devoured hot breakfast rolls cooked to order by Billy's wife Alison.



St Abbs Harbour

Big Black Carrs was our first destination – a gentle reef dive around pinnacles and walls festooned with dahlia, plumose and jewel anemones. On a major hunt for the notorious Wolf Fish, we had to be content with schools of Pollack. Back to the harbour for to replenish our energy with fresh rolls from the hillside café, where they also serve the best hot chocolate in the world! With the sun still shining on us we were soon back out for our second dive of the day – this time on a mission to squeeze ourselves through Tyes Tunnel. In spite of Billy giving very good instructions on how to find the entrance, I ended up peering into a slit in the rocks that a large crab would have had a problem getting through so there was no way that Gary and his twinset were going in that direction! Needless to say we discovered later we had been looking in the wrong place, but we weren't the only ones – not one of us actually made it through the tunnel! Still a great drift dive with abundant sea life including a very inky octopus!

On Sunday morning – sunny again – we set off for the wreck of the Glanmire. She's about 80m long and is quite broken up in about 34 metres but what a great dive. The prop is covered in soft corals and the whole wreck is alive with schools of pollack, ling, bib..... and a diver carrying a silver bucket?? At this point I was sure Narcosis had set in but discovered later that the Mask bucket had somehow made it's way down the shot line! The viz was a good 10m making it an easy job to navigate around the whole ship and yes, finally we found Wolf Fish – two to be exact, snuggled together in a small hole looking quite cute after the big monsters I feared.



The illusive Wolf Fish – definitely not first in the queue when looks were being handed out!

The last dive of the trip was a sort of 'whoosh' dive rather than a drift dive! Around West Hurker, in and out of gullies and over long sandy 'roads' ending up in what's known as the Barnyard! When we finally surfaced we were surrounded by rocky cliffs and only a narrow out let through which to regain the open sea and, more importantly, the Lady Gail! But by this time the current was determined to keep us in the 'yard' and it was only after much finning and Nick's rope throwing that we finally climbed out onto the boat in a near state of collapse!

It's fair to say that after that we were well and truly 'worn out' with a capital 'K' and our response to the DO's suggestion that we finish the day off with a shore dive out to Cathedral Rock is simply not printable – nice try Gary, maybe next year!