

# York Sub Aqua Club Newsletter

# Bottom Times

April / May 2004 Issue 7

## Club Boat "First Out of the Season" at Farne Islands!



York Sub-Aqua Club Boat, was confirmed by Brian the Seahouses Harbour Master as being the "first boat out of the season" when it was taken on its first sea dives this year at Easter. He is pictured here with Ian Hodgkinson showing off the No1 registration number accompanied by Caroline Salmons, Cathy Moore and Nick Eden.

See inside for trip report, and how you can book the club boat for a trip.

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## **Chairman's Chat**

Although I thanked all the people on last year's committee and others who had helped the club at the AGM, this is the first time I have been able to do so in writing so a BIG THANK YOU TO ALL. As you will all probably know, Geoff stood down, and his place on the committee has been taken by Caroline. Caroline has taken on both the duties of Registrar and Membership Secretary, formerly undertaken by Geoff and Debbie J. Welcome to the committee, kid! And also a warm welcome to Hilary.

On behalf of the members of York Sub Aqua Club, may I wish Geoff and Ann all the very best for their proposed joint venture. Contracts will be exchanged on 9 May, with many year's of happy marriage in prospect.

I must say that I am truly impressed by the amount of pre-season warm up diving that has gone on, and the commitment shown by members in enrolling on Skill Development Courses. Dave Blackburn's trip to Stoney and Goldenburgh went off without a hitch, except for a slight difference of opinion as to whether it was GMT (Gary's Mean Time) or BST (Blackie's Summer Time) It was kind of Geoff to lend us his motor home to use as a base. Everyone who went to the Lakes on the PRM said that they had a good time.

Easter weekend saw both the club boat and Sugar Free at the Farnes. It was a most enjoyable weekend, with good weather, but the diving was a bit naf – poor viz, intensely cold water and a persistent long swell that made the better dive sites inaccessible. At least we had better conditions at May Day Bank Holiday.

Here's hoping for another year's excellent diving. Only half as good as last year will be quite something! I tried my neoprene wetsuit out to ensure it would be ready for Gozo. I'm sure that neoprene shrinks if it doesn't get immersed regularly.....

Yours in Diving  
Ian



This photograph of a plumose anemone was taken by Peri Stracchino, a new Sport Diver member who joined the club in March.

A keen underwater photographer, Peri took this picture on the Club's Easter Trip to the Farnes.

See overleaf for her trip report

## ***North-Easterlies in Northumberland – Peri Stracchino Reports***

I was young(ish). I was foolish. I was a new York BSAC member, and this was my first trip to the Farnes. As we headed up the A1 I questioned my sanity. This was early April, and as is traditional on the Easter Bank Holiday we would inevitably get blown out. And to top it all, we were camping! Sheer madness.

Well as it happened, I was wrong. Despite a north easterly wind we had three full days diving, and I got to know my fellow club members much better – but decided to stay in the club anyway. The Magnificent Ten were Cathy, Ian H, Sue T, Vicky, Gary, Nick, Ian and Caroline S, Sue B and Peri. The wusses stayed in B&B luxury, whilst the truly intrepid roughed it on the campsite. You would not believe how the prospect of sub-zero trips to the Ladies reduces your beer consumption.

Anyway, onto the diving. Viz was not great – in fact we all agreed we'd done a few night dives at midday – but it was fantastic to get back in the sea. For me the high spots were circling the seal colonies whilst being buzzed by Puffins and Razorbills, and realising that most people were paying for boat trips just to experience this, whilst for us it was just the warm up to our main activity. Although the seals did not join us on any dives, it was thrilling just to know they were around. And porpoises were spotted from the boat!

We dived the Pinnacles, St Andre, Gun Rock, Fang Reef and Bluecaps. Favourite dives had to be Fang Reef and Bluecaps: Fang Reef because of its lovely soft coral festooned drop off, with a multitude of boulders to poke around in at its base, and kelp forest above, with the sun filtering through the fronds like tropical jungle. Bluecaps partly because of its sheer variety – corridors, walls and boulders – but also because I was entranced by the pretty little hermit crabs who had chosen to make their home in mother-of-pearl covered periwinkle shells. And also a Sea-Spider – an eerie little beast that looks as if it should be lurking in a plughole.



Close up of sea anemone tentacles

Finally, dived out and not relishing a further night bundled up in three layers of clothing, the campers bottled out on Sunday night, whilst the B&Bers remained for a final evening of debauchery.

I returned from the Farnes a wiser woman, having learned three vital lessons:

- 1) Ian S's nickname used to be "Swigger". Can anyone explain why?
- 2) The club finances would be permanently rosy if Ian H was issued with a swearbox.
- 3) Never go camping in April.

## ***Booking the club boat***

A copy of Diving Operations Procedures by the Diving Officer has been sent out with this copy of Bottom Times. See the Club Notice Board if you have not received your copy.

Over the past few weeks the Club Boat has been out on several occasions: acting as a useful prop on the recent PRM course (see article) and taking club members diving at the Farne Islands. The more it is used the more club members appreciate it and get to know it and understand what maintenance and repair jobs need doing on it. Many thanks to Dave Blackburn and Ian Hodgkinson for all their hard work in getting the boat ready for this season.



The Committee want to encourage as many club members as possible to use the boat – it is our asset and here for us all to enjoy. To this end a set of guidelines have been drawn up by the DO and approved by the Committee:

- Any club member can arrange and plan a dive, provided they
  - Have the agreement of the Diving Officer (Gary Cameron)
  - Advertise it freely on the club notice board, preferably 2 – 3 weeks in advance.
  - Get help and mentoring if the planned dive is beyond their experience.
- For use of the club boat
  - the cox must be approved by the DO
  - The cox must hold the minimum grade of Dive Leader; must hold a BSAC Boat Handling Course certificate, or equivalent, and have a valid RYA VHF radio certificate
  - If the Club Boat is going out on its own, two qualified boat handlers are required.
  - The Club Boat is expected to carry 6 divers.

The boat was last out over the May Bank holiday weekend with a full load of divers at the Farne Islands. As to when it's used next – over to you!

## ***Open Water Instructor Course – Ellerton Water***

Four members of the club have recently taken this course – Sue Tuckett and Cathy Moore on a freezing rainy weekend in April, and Hilary Reed and Dave Scaife in glorious sunshine just one week later.

For those who are unfamiliar with the new BSAC instructor grades (and that's most of us!), here's how it works. The first step to becoming an Open Water Instructor (OWI) is to take a two day IFC (this used to be called an ITC, and these are still valid.) You can do this as a Sport Diver. This weekend course goes over the basics of teaching in the pool and how to plan lectures. When this course has been successfully completed, and providing you are a Dive Leader, you take an OWIC, more of which later. Then successful completion of a PIE (practical instructor exam) and a TIE (theory instructor exam) leads to the award of Open Water Instructor, when you can sign people's books. You can stop before this and be a Practical Instructor or a Theory Instructor and just sign people off for those bits of training. Still with me?

So hopefully, before the end of the year, Sue, Cathy, Hilary and Dave will be OWI's along with Ian Salmons who is already a TIE, and just needs to complete his PIE.

The four of us all got a lot out of our day long Open Water Instructor Course. It was useful to think about the new things that you have to take into consideration when teaching in Open Water, not just the skills but also from a safety point of view – after all, it's hard to lose a student in a swimming pool! But we all felt that the day was rushed, with theory in the morning, and practical sessions in the afternoon, and might have been better spread over two days. We were all reassured by the fact the instructors weren't perfect and so the atmosphere was quite laid back, and any nerves we had disappeared quite quickly. Talking together after the event we realised that there had been quite large discrepancies between what different instructors were teaching, and so I think we are all slightly confused as to exactly what they will be looking for come the exam (which as you remember is called the PIE!).

We would all recommend the course for anyone who ever teaches in Open Water – even if you don't want to take the exam: the day gave us all useful tips and it was good to meet divers from other clubs.

## ***Practical Rescue Management Course, Coniston, 3rd April 2004***



Drew Goddard plays the part of a casualty on the PRM – where's that oxygen?

## ***PRM - The DO reports***

The Practical Rescue Management Course (PRM) is a rescue management course run within the Branch about once a year. This year we decided to organise the PRM for Lake Coniston on the Saturday morning and Wastwater for shore dives on the Sunday.

Dave Scaife volunteered to tow the club boat and we all arrived at Coniston Village about 9.00 am. We had 5 students on the course and 5 people helping. Dave Scaife and Andrew Goddard were doing the PRM as a requirement for the New Advanced Diver "cross over" syllabus. Caroline Salmons, Paul McFadyen and Dave Blackburn were attending the course for the new Dive Leader syllabus. I was arranging the days events assisted by Sue Blackburn, Ian Hodgkinson, Cathy Moore and Sue Tuckett.

Normal running for the branch run PRM is for the more experience students to go first, this gives the less experienced people a chance to see how rescue scenarios can be handled. So Dave Scaife was first off, followed by Andrew Goddard. Next off Paul McFadyen, most experienced of the Sport Divers, followed by Dave Blackburn and Caroline Salmons. The day went very well and to time. We packed all our equipment away and placed the club boat in the compound for an overnight stay.

### ***A helper's view – Sue Tuckett***

Having meticulously planned a variety of 'Rescue Scenario's before hand, our DO directed us in our various roles and put the five students through their paces. Dave Scaife was faced with dealing with rapid ascents and lost divers, followed by Drew, who has yet to fully recover his hearing, after my screams and Cathy's hysterics as the propeller slashed it's way through my leg! The whole of Coniston Village is still convinced that this is actually what happened!

With thorough briefings before and de-briefings after each scenario, not only did the students gain valuable experience of managing the type of incidents associated with diving, but those of us helping also benefited from a refresher of the course. I found it a useful reminder of rescue management skills and the ever present need to plan for every eventuality before a dive.



Paul McFadyen administers Oxygen to Ian Hodgkinson during one of the scenarios on the PRM course

### ***A student's view – Paul McFadyen***

The PRM course is worthwhile doing to further your development as a diver and I found that doing it meant I gained confidence in my organisational skills. All I would say is that some of the scenarios were maybe a bit over-complicated – in five years of diving I have yet to see a single serious incident so to have two buddy pairs with CO2 poisoning and hypothermia at the same time was maybe a little unrealistic. However, the day was enjoyable despite the weather, and thanks to Gary for organising it and all the helpers.

## ***Wastwater – divers do it deeper***

The day after the PRM, most of us headed out to Wastwater for an early dive before a well earned Sunday lunch.



Wastwater is a fabulous site giving easy access, clear water (around 12 metres viz) and variable depth diving down to 50 + metres. Plus it has to be one of the most beautiful places to sit and have that post-dive coffee and jaffa cake. It is an excellent area to prepare for the season, but needs to be treated with respect and the deeper depths worked up to gradually. Quite a few divers have lost their lives at this site mainly for diving too deep too early. The lake is the deepest in England and plummets to 75m. So take care!

The good thing about Wastwater is that you can choose your own depth and dive. some of us had

dived the lake before and chose again to revisit the popular 'Pinnacles' site for some early season depth experience and to make our own special mark in the Gnome Garden. Yes, YORK SAC's very own 'Froggy' now sits proudly in 45 metres of pitch black lake, probably wishing he was back on the shelf in Barnitts! Very special thanks to Cathy and Paul for placing him there!



However, you don't have to go to deeper than your experience, and the Pinacles Gnome garden is best worked up to – it is essential that you are weighted correctly and have equipment that can cope with very cold water. Dave and Sue Blackburn found another gnome garden at 30m with an entry point just yards away from where the cars were parked and were very happy with their dive.

## **Stoney Cove / Gildenburgh Trip**

Our very own equipment officer, Dave Blackburn, needing an exciting venue to practice his dive marshalling skills, decided to organise a pleasure trip sampling different quarries in the Midlands in March. Mad? No, that would be the 8 other people who fell over themselves to sign up for the trip! Ian S, Hilary, Peri, Dave and Sue B, Cathy, Paul, Sue T and Gary. although, to be fair, once we'd got over the "this is mad" barrier, we actually had some very enjoyable pre-season warm up dives.

Stoney Cove is one of the largest purpose built dive quarries in Britain. Very popular due to its central location, near Hinckley, Leicestershire, it attracts hordes of divers every weekend throughout the year. Luckily we managed to get the camper van (thanks Geoff!) in the bottom car park to give us a base and we all managed to have two enjoyable dives – for some of us depth experience, as the quarry goes down to 30+ metres, for others pike spotting and inspecting usual array of sunken playthings (helicopter, tugboat, 10mlong fibreglass submarine...)

Sunday morning saw us at Gildenburgh, near Peterborough which is a dive centre situated on a silty lake much used for training. So much used in fact that the vis was about 2m, and, due to the sun, a curious bright greenish colour. All the sunken attractions are roped together, and there was something incredibly relaxing about not having to navigate but just finning gently along ropes not knowing what you were going to find until it loomed up at you: a double decker bus complete with pike, a coach, a volvo truck, and best of all an intact jet provost!

Many thanks to Dave for organising what is probably going to rate as the most unusual trip of the year!

### ***Special notice from the committee – access to the compressor house***

*Access to the compressor house is now controlled by a gate between the main sports club car park and the road leading to the storage buildings. A key to this gate will be kept by Brian the Bar Steward and the first person to arrive on a Tuesday evening is asked to obtain the key and open the gate for those wanting fills. The key must then be returned to Brian and the gate closed when we are finished. Additional keys will be provided for compressor house key holders. Please do not drive over the grass to the compressor house. Thank you.*