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Editors Note

The traditional start of the diving season, Easter, was very early this year with weather more suited to Alpine sports. A few hardy souls from the club have already opened their 2008 diving logs. Russell Rafton organised a trip to North Wales at the beginning of March. The few that attended enjoyed a great weekend of diving and socialising. Strong winds prevented the planned sea dive but diving took place in both Vivian and Dorothea quarries.

The club trip to Palau in February was a great success. A curry night with a talk and film show about the trip took place on the evening of 7 March.

The Annual General Meeting took place in the club house on the evening of Tuesday 25 March. The new committee were elected and a Pie and Pea supper was served during the interval.

The new committee is as follows:-

Chairman:	Russell Rafton
Diving Officer:	Gary Cameron
Treasurer	Dave Scaife
Secretary	Sue Tuckett
Equipment Officer	Ian Casling
Committee Members	Phil Peace
	Nick Eden
	Charlotte Critchley
	Mike Roberts

Nick Eden was again appointed as the Training Officer.

The Diving Officer Presented Patrick Reedy with the "Wet of the Year" Trophy.



Russell Rafton was presented with the “Diver of the Year” Trophy and was also awarded the “Heinke” Trophy, voted for by the members.



Serving Supper



Ian Casling the new Equipment Officer.



Charlotte Critchley a welcome new member to the Committee.



Phil Peace returned to the Committee.



Operation of the compressor is essential to diving and training within the club. At present this duty falls to a small number of individuals who have undertaken the necessary training. To spread the burden of compressor operation it is proposed to provide training to all members of the club who are interested. The training will take place on a Tuesday evening in the compressor house with a further opportunity for practice with assistance on subsequent Tuesday evenings to be arranged. Anyone interested in operating the compressor should contact Gary Cameron and declare their interest.

Diving Officers Report

Your Club needs you...

We are now at the start of the 2008 diving season and we have had two trips run already. A major trip to Palau and a weekend trip to North Wales. We have a number of small trips organised so far but we really need more trip organisers to move the branch forward. This is an ideal task for Dive Leaders or Sport Divers aiming to become Dive Leaders. My view has always been to

empower members to move forward and become Dive Leaders and indeed Instructors. I will be putting some more training courses in place this year but the important point of it all is that we go diving.

Try Dives

We have been advertising monthly Try Dives on our website, and these have proven to be very successful. Due to the Try Dive initiative we have recruited a lot more new members. This now means that we need more Try Dive Instructors and Lifeguards at the pool. Because we have a lot of new recruits, then we have fewer Instructors available to take the next round of Try Dives. Please help here

Try Dive Instructor

To be a Try Dive Instructor you need to be a Sport Diver and have attended the BSAC Instructor Foundation Course (IFC). I would advise anyone interested in widening their diving experience to attend the IFC. It is a very good course. It is a full weekend and run by BSAC HQ. It teaches you the control of Students and various presentation techniques. I also think that is a good idea to go as a group from the branch.

Lifeguards

Just a reminder that we need volunteers at the pool to be lifeguards. You need to be a Sport Diver or have passed the Lifeguard course and exam. (See Below). We have a chronic shortage of members volunteering to be lifeguards. Please come forward.

Club RIB

I want to encourage people to use the Club RIB more and as a reminder you need to be a Dive Leader, and attended the Boat Handling Course, and have passed the RYA VHF Exam. In addition you will need to prove that you have the relevant level of expertise. That is either as a direct demonstration to the DO or, by attending the BSAC Diver Coxswain Exam. Any Branch assessment will be along the lines of the Diver Coxswain Exam. Anyone interested in Boat Handling and general seaman ship, might be interested in attending the Day Skipper course run by the York Cruiser Training Centre. This is a course that starts in September and runs through to March. The course teaches you basic seaman ship skills. You can then attend their practical courses if you wish. A number of members of the branch have used their courses and indeed remain members of YCTC. See our links page on the website.

Courses

This year we will be running a Lifesaver exam. You can attend this course and exam if you have been awarded Ocean Diver.

PRM – we will again be running a Practical Rescue Management course and you need to have Sport Diver Signed up before attending this course. There is no exam for this course.

O2 – We will again be running an O2 Course later in the year. This is an excellent course for brushing up your rescue breathing skills. You need to be Ocean Diver to attend this course. There will be an assessment on this course. But you will pass it.

Boat Handling – We may run this course later in the year but ideally we need additional Boat Handling Instructors in the Branch.

Chart Work and position fixing (CWPF) – weekend courses probably run at Whitby. Hopefully later in the year. But will depend on available Instructors.

Diver Coxswain – This can now be assessed within the branch. But only if you were not in one of the Boat Handling Courses that I ran a few years ago. Let me know if you are interested.

OD/SD/DL – These courses will be run as demand dictates.

AD – IF you are really interested in AD then let me know.

The Club Website

The profile of the branch Website seems to go from strength to strength. We are trying to keep all information on the Website and up to date.

Committee Changes

I would also like to thank Nick Eden who has agreed to be the Branch Training Officer for another year.

Ian Casling has also agreed to be the Equipment Officer this year but will be getting help from Dave Scaife and Russell Rafton. We are splitting the responsibilities for Club RIB, Training Kit and Compressor.

Instructors

Thanks to all the help from the Instructors this year.

Summary

We need more dive organisation. We need more diving. If you have any ideas for dives then let me know.

We need more Lifeguard volunteers. Please help.

If you are interested in attending any of the courses we can run then please let me know.

If you are at all interested in Dive Organisation then please let me know.

In Short please come forward and help out.

NITROX MIX – UP



Unfortunately I didn't get time to write this article for the last bottom times edition, however when approached by Brian to provide some substance for this quarterly edition, this story immediately sprung to mind. There is a valuable lesson to learn from this story, hope you enjoy reading it as much as I did writing it.

A Recent dive trip to a popular dive destination Sharm El sheikh, Egypt October 2007. Me and my new found buddy had already had several glorious days diving in the red sea when the long awaited opportunity arose for us to take the trip out the SS. Thistlegorm. For me this was a return to one of my favourite wreck dives ever, for my buddy this was a new adventure diving a wreck which would actually look complete, in good visibility and warm waters, a vast improvement from his previous experience's in Bridlington and Whitby.

The SS Thistlegorm was a British armed Merchant Navy ship built in 1940 by Joseph Thompson & Son in Sunderland, England. She was sunk on 5 October 1941 near Ras Muhammad in the Red Sea. She was armed with a 4-inch (102 mm) anti-aircraft gun and a heavy calibre machine gun attached after construction for war duty. The Thistlegorm set sail on her last voyage from Glasgow on 2 June 1941 destined for Alexandria.



She was carrying supplies to relieve the 8th Army in preparation for Operation Crusader. The Suez Canal at that time was closed as a result of a ship collision. For two weeks the ship stood moored at this supposedly safe position awaiting instructions to proceed through the canal. The Thistlegorm was a sitting target for two German bombers returning to Crete. Allegedly they had been searching for a large troop carrier, believed to be the Queen Mary when they ran low on fuel, turned home, and stumbled upon the Thistlegorm. They dropped two 1,000 lb (450 kg) bombs directly onto the ship. The bombs penetrated No 4 Hold detonating much ammunition. The explosion killed nine crew members and was so forceful that it launched two railway locomotives stacked on deck into the air now laying either side on the sea bed.

The trip out to the SS Thistlegorm requires an early launch 4am, and unfortunately for my buddy and I the previous week of tasting the Egyptian cuisine had taken its toll and we were both plagued with the dreaded "Cairo quickstep" forever in search of a toilet.

Holding our stomach and awaiting for the boat to launch before we could use the facilities without fouling the harbour sea, we put our brave face on and pressed forth. We spent most of the journey either asleep or knee's up praying on the pot. When we finally arrived, we were the first onsite, unusual due to its popularity however, the dive guide Donna (Emperor Divers) knowing the site's popularity was quick to give a briefing and have us be the first in the water with the wreck to ourselves.

The brief contained the usual; do's and don'ts, stick together, buddy pairs & checks, ships layout and max dive time and depth. Whilst I was able to concentrate on the brief feeling somewhat better and prepared for the dive, my buddy wasn't and was confined to the four walls of the ships praying pot. After he finally found confidence to leave we discussed opting

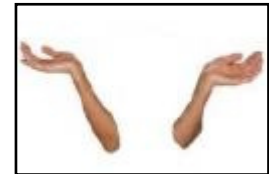
out of the dive in fear of farting in our wetsuits. However both decided we were feeling somewhat better and didn't want to miss the opportunity of a wreck to ourselves.

I had already prepared for the dive with my kit ready and air tank changed and checked, whilst my buddy quickly scuttled round getting his kit together. I proceeded to kit up in my wet suit whilst my buddy followed. There are always deck hands on board the boats so my buddy made use of them requesting a cylinder and a hand on with his wet suit.

Finished we quickly buddy checked; Buoyancy , Air , Releases (BAR) etc;

The boy line was dropped and all twelve of us quickly entered the water and down the shoot line in anticipation. As this was my buddies first time I was eager to show him round the out side of the wreck ensuring he didn't miss a thing. We descended down, Port side of the wreck down to the stern (30 meters) where we swam round the prop, admiring it size and beauty also finding time to pose for pictures. After hanging around watching the huge grouper who makes the prop area his home we ascended up starboard side stopping to view the blast hole and the large live ammunition shells.

For some reason my buddy felt it necessary to remove his regulator from his mouth, pull a funny face and shrug his shoulders. When I raised my hands in a "what's the matter" made up underwater signal, he indicated everything was fine and to carry on.



We proceeded with our dive finding our way up to the captains quarters, with a little penetration so I could show him the captains bathroom and pretend to sit in the bath. Following a quick look over the bow seeing the anchor chain still laid out it was time to make our way back to the shot line ready for ascent. Reluctant to leave the beautiful wreck we had a gradual ascent stopping a six meters for a safety stop, looking back seeing 15meters + in visibility we could admire the ships size, whilst being continually fascinated by the giant bat fish that hang around a six meters for a chat.



As my buddy turned to watch the fish with one hand on the shot, his 15ltr tank near hitting me, the tank proudly boasted a green and yellow sticker reading "NITROX 32%".

In horror I quickly spun my buddy round to check his maximum depth on his computer - 30 meters. Thank god for that! My buddy questioning my actions I reassured him everything was fine- not to worry and to proceed with the ascent. After scrabbling over the now choppy waves onto the boat, we had a buddy debrief. My buddy now realizing he had dived with a Nitrox gas mix, was in complete shock and decided it was the deck hands fault for passing him the wrong tank. Unfortunately I explained it was his responsibility to check the gas before kitting up. My buddy was a qualified Nitrox diver, and had luckily not exceeded the 35 Maximum Operating Depth (MOD) of the gas mix, for this we were lucky. However this in any other dive could have been a complete different outcome.

Whilst diving mixed gases within their known limits is considered safer diving – you must in the first instance know what your mix is –check your cylinders! Needless to say cylinder checks were then incorporated within our buddy checks for the following dives that week, and my buddy whole heartedly honoured his mistake and even paid up for the use of Nitrox.

A valuable lesson was learned for us both that dive, if your not prepared don't dive, and always check your own kit and don't rely on others to scrabble it together for you last minute.

Safe diving all, Thanks
Russell