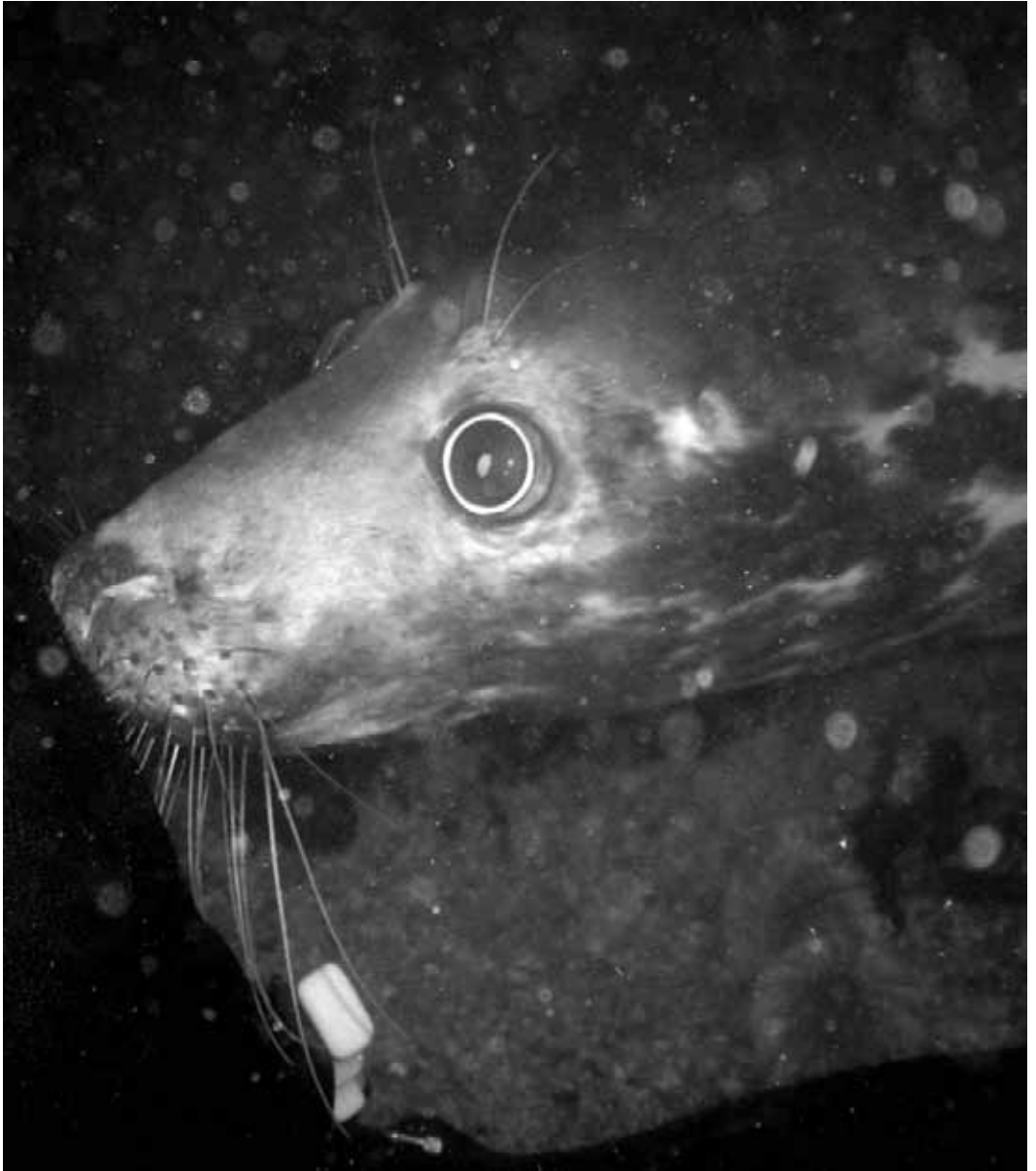


LONDON DIVER



NOVEMBER 2005

THE MAGAZINE OF BSAC LONDON NO.1 BRANCH

editorial

Please email all submissions to
claire@xxxxxxxx.org.uk
or phone me on xxxxx xxxxxx for my address details



Hi, and welcome to my first issue as editor. As most of you will already have heard by now, Joe has passed the editorial baton on to me. This seems like a good time to thank Joe for all his help in putting together this issue and for all his hard work over the three years he has been editing *London Diver*. I also want to thank all the contributors for saving me from also having to write my first issue! This editorial is starting to sound a little like an Oscar acceptance speech so I am going to stop thanking people now.

I am a relatively new diver (I think the grand total is currently 11 dives), so at the moment I don't have Joe's wealth of stories to draw on for my editorials. But I have been bitten by the diving bug and am looking forward to the new season for another excuse to spend a fortune on new kit. Fortunately I have Jamie's article to guide me away from my current "will it go with my existing kit" or rather "does it come in black?" purchasing methodology.

I had my first trip with the club back in September in the Farne Islands. Now I have heard that the easiest way to avoid your embarrassing stories

appearing in print is to write them yourself before anyone else has chance. I am therefore going to admit right now to a certain amount of sea sickness on my first couple of trips on *Percy Too*. I could sing the praises of sea sickness tablets almost as much as I could rave about the seals. I have already bored most of my non-diving friends talking about seals, so I am going to leave that to Hannah and her article about the Farne Islands.

It seems to be the issue for articles by new members, with Tristan's article about Plymouth adding to the collection.

Finally, just a quick plea. Please keep sending me articles and pictures to put into the magazine, it would be nothing without your contributions.

Claire

Chairman's chatter



Another Committee year starts. The Officers of the Branch remain the same as last year following the AGM. We have lost Bernie & Richard who have both stood down. Please accept my thanks for the work you have done in the committee in the past year.

Welcome to Hannah & Mathew who were voted on to the Committee at the AGM. Mathew will assist with equipment & Hannah will be doing some marketing. Please remember we are all able to carry out marketing for the Branch, at our places of work & among friends.

Following Joe's wish to hand over the baton for editing London Diver, a willing replacement has been found. Claire will, I am sure, do a wonderful job & the fact she is editing this item has not coloured my comments in any way.

Thanks Joe for developing London diver during your time as editor making it informative, entertaining & yes easy to read. I'm sure now you are not editing you will have a few articles in you.

As I am speaking of Joe I guess I should mention the Yahoo group that he has set up many if not all of you should have by now received an electronic invitation to join please do take part as it hopefully will be a big step forward in the internal

communications of the Branch.

Welcome also to some new members joined since the last edition of London Diver:- Alexis Soubeyrand, David Preece and George Vartolomeev.

The Plaque for TJ has been ordered it will sit next to Ted's on the bench on Swanage Pier. I will let you know when it has been fitted.

Many of you missed the AGM do. You really don't know what an evening you missed.

There is the upcoming Xmas evening out, also a Xmas dive neither are events to be missed & I commend them both to you. I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Happy Christmas with a happy, healthy & exciting diving New Year.

*Jim
Chairman*

the d.o. reports...



Hi All,

The start of a new year as DO, last year thankfully was not too demanding for me mainly because as last year I have had lots of help and support from most of the membership.

As last year I would like to thank all those who stood on the committee. And all the help and hard work they put into the branch last year, and all those outside the committee who also put in a lot of work to help keep us all diving in 2005, I won't name names you all know who you are and besides its most of the branch.

The Training Officer this year will be Tobias for a short time as he has wonder lust and is looking for a job in some exotic location. Morgan has stood down as training officer this year but he is still keen to carry on teaching, so if there is any one out there who would like to step in and take the reins when Tobias is not around I would love to hear from you.

There is not much to say at the moment as it is the beginning of the new committee year and not much is happening on the dive front, except for the training which of course still goes on, so I will reiterate most of what I said at this time last year as it is all still relevant

Again I will be looking towards the whole branch

membership for ideas about where to go diving next year, also volunteers to help with diving trips i.e. anyone willing to drive and tow the boat down to dive sites. I will be looking for people to marshal dives, assist with marshalling, boat handling and everything that is needed to make diving trips run smoothly.

Speak to me soon on ideas on which dive sites you would like to visit next year, in order that the committee can decide the dive calendar for next season.

When the dive calendar is decided and the sites are posted on the notice board please put your names down a.s.a.p. Let me know if you would like to help with anything, don't be afraid to ask what is involved in any part of diving activities, it is always best to know what is involved even though you may not be at that time.

Remember this is a club and it is down to us all to help out, if most of us help even in a small way it will make the branch and dives run much more smoothly and make it a more enjoyable season next year.

I am looking forward to seeing you all soon at the pool, Percy (pub), or on a dive site.

Cheers,

Keith

goodbye...

“Now’s the time to say goodbye; Now’s the time to yield a sigh...”

Yes, yes, we’ll get to that in a minute. But first, I’d like to tell you all a small tale about a nice man called Mendel. Every couple of months I go and visit Mendel, a softly spoken gentlemen of advancing years, at his place of work, a branch of a high street printing business in the City of London. “Ah, hello again”, he usually says, “I was thinking it was about time I’d be seeing you in here”. Tapping away at his little screen he soon brings up the details, “Let’s see, it’s B.S.A.C. isn’t it...?” I hand him a disc and he scurries off, apparently glad of the temporary release from his usual fare of business cards and letterhead orders. “Ah, yes” he mutters as the front page of London Diver pops up on his monitor, “everything looks to be in order... ooh, is that a manatee?”.

We’ve come a long way, Mendel and I, since my first issue, when seemingly no amount of patient explanation could quite convince him what it was that I was after. Even the name was cause for much confusion at first. “So you’re all cabbies then, are you?”. “Er, sorry?”, I said, standing there in a pin-stripe suit. “Well, you know...” he said in complete seriousness, “...London Driver? I assumed it was for taxi

drivers or something...”.

Resisting the urge to point out that, the name aside,

the front cover showed several people dressed in rubber standing on a boat, I bit my tongue and happily explained what it was we were about. It’s been plain sailing ever since.

Mendel is one of the people I’d like to thank for his contribution to the magazine as I step down as its editor. I was always the first person, after Mendel of course, to see each new printed edition of London Diver and as I type now it feels really strange to think that when this gets printed and lands on my doorstep, I’ll be able to read it from cover to cover for the first time (without having already read it front to back and back to front many, many times before). In fact, I’m really quite looking forward to that.

I have confidence that Claire already has and will continue to do a fabulous job with the magazine, and I hope everyone makes an effort to make her life as the new editor a bit easier by volunteering to submit articles to publish and by keeping to whatever deadline (I realise some of you might have to look that word up in a dictionary) she sets. I would also like to wish her luck and hope she finds her own little Mendel to help her along the way.



So finally, thank you to everyone in the Branch for contributing articles, photos, puzzles, ideas and even the occasional encouragement during my stint in the editor's chair. It's been a blast. You never know, now I might even get the chance to pen the odd piece more often myself. In fact, I might have to go out guns-a-blazing. Now that I no longer get to oversee the content, I'm guessing I'll be fair game to poke fun at... In fact, I'm sure I can just about hear across the street, deep in the bowels of UBS, the sound of a gleeful little chuckle as Mr Obern sharpens his 2B pencil. You know, I could tell you about the time he... ah, sadly I've only been given one page so that will have to

wait...

“Until we meet again; Some sunny day...”



august bank holiday in plymouth

Morgan, Tobias, Keith, Richard, Mathew, Hannah and I met up on a beautiful and sunny Saturday morning last August bank holiday, after a good nights sleep at the Mountbatten Centre. After a hearty full English breakfast (including a cherry tomato) we headed down to met the skipper from Deep Blue Diving. Due to past events including a certain Range Rover we would be using Deep Blue Diving's rib and after a quick-debrief we were flying across the water to our first dive for the day.

The first dive was very special, especially for Hannah and me, as it was our first ever in English waters (I hadn't ever dipped my toe in the English Channel let alone dive in it!).

Apart from being my first ever UK dive it was also my first time dive off a rib, and before I knew it we were gently sinking into the deep abyss. When we finally got to the bottom I was amazed at how clear the visibility was, a lot better than I ever expected, but more importantly how much life there was. I think a lot of this praise has to be given to my dive buddy Keith who looked under every rock and crevasse to find more and more interesting things to see including my first ever Cuttlefish.

When the dive had finished and we were all safely back on the boat I found out (to Keith's amusement) that the big junk of debris on the bottom was in fact the Glen Strath Allen and apart from being my first rib and UK dive was also my first ever wreck dive to!!

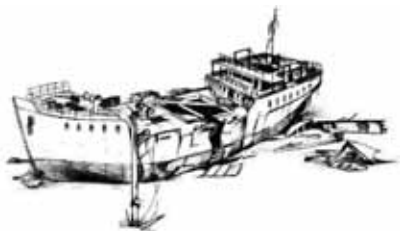
After lunch I was eager to get back out there and before I know it we were again skimming across the water to Hulsea Point.

If I thought the first dive was good then this was 10 times better, a lot of this praise has to go to the skipper from Deep Blue diving who dropped us right on the point. Again I was teamed up with Keith and had an enjoyable dive swimming in and out of the gullies.

That evening we ventured across to Plymouth Old Town and headed to the infamous Platters. After enjoying the biggest portion of fish and chips EVER while trying not to stare too long at the guy in the doggy wig, it was time to head back for a last minute beverage before getting a good night sleep for tomorrows dives.

If there was some confusion over the Glen Strath Allen being classed as a wreck dive then the same could not be said for the James Eagan Lane, know as being the most dived wreck in the UK. Now this is what I call a wreck! Budding up with Tobias we delved in and out and

even saw my first John Dowry. What a fantastic dive!



After lunch, and with everyone back on the rib about to head off for the second dive of the day Tobias's dry suit zip broke and unfortunately he was unable to dive. This bit of bad luck was unfortunately going to continue, while I was diving I appeared to have a leak from my first stage, much to Matthew's distress. This meant that the dive was made a lot shorter than my poor dive buddy Keith and I wanted.

Back on dry land the leaked didn't appear as severe as it must of looked underwater and just involved tightening up my hose pipes so luckily (unlike Tobias) I was able to dive tomorrow.

That evening we again ventured to Plymouth Old Town and after negotiating our way through the hordes enjoying the sunny evening weather found ourselves a place to eat.

The next morning was very different and unlike before where we had had bright sunny weather we instead woke to very thick looking fog. I guess I can't complain too much as the weather and conditions had been perfect up until now, still this wasn't going to put us off as everyone (especially me) was excited as we were going to dive the Sycylla today!

Now my knowledge of UK diving is pretty poor at the best of times, but even I had heard of the Sycylla, which was sunk about 3 years ago to become a natural reef. Having heard many stories about this dive, one being how popular it is with divers / boats everywhere, it was to everyone's joy we turned out to be one of the few boats there. Budding up with Morgan we stayed mainly around the first and second floor decks swimming in and out of the cabins, and holes that had been cut specially for divers.

I have to admit that I didn't enjoy the dive as much as the James Eagan Lane which apart from being a much older ship had more aquatic life on and around it. Still the Sycylla had only been sunk recently and in places was already looking to provide its objective of becoming a natural reef. Upon surfacing it became apparent, to the delight of the skipper, eagle eyed Keith made the first ever sighting of a conger eel to make its residence on the Sycylla!!

The last dive of a very successful trip was back to Hilsea Point. Budding up with Morgan again we had a nice dive in and

around the gullies, but it appeared to be Richard and Matthew that had the final find of the trip by stumbling onto a small cave, again much to the joy of our skipper who had been looking for this cave for ages!!

On reflection, I can't thank Tobias, Keith, Morgan, Matthew, Tom, Hannah and Deep Blue Diving

enough for making my first ever UK dive trip a most enjoyable and unforgettable one. I honestly had no idea that there was so much life, colour (and debris) right on my door step and honestly saw more interesting and wonderful things on those 3 days than I ever did in 6 months diving in Turkey!! I'm afraid that I've got the diving bug now and can't wait for my next trip with BSAC no. 1.

teaching opportunities

Today is my first day back at work and my second day as an Advanced Instructor having just completed the BSAC combined AIC and AIE event in Gozo. I am not alone as London Branch now has 4 new AIs – Dave, Mel, Tobias and myself. Congratulations to all, particularly to Dave who still passed, even after having told the examiner during the final surface teaching session on the boat “You can stick your ***** exam and your ***** qualification, I'm not ***** doing it.” It's amazing how we all revert to type under stress. Once a builder.....

For those of you who aren't familiar with such events I will give a brief explanation. A couple of times a year BSAC offers combined courses, where you can do either the

TIE, PIE and OWI courses and exams, or the AIC and AIE as we did. If you are unfamiliar with the TLAs* then you can ask one of us – it will be a good ‘teaching opportunity’. For us the AIC ran Tues-Wed-Thursday, Friday was a preparation day and the exam was Sat-Sun. We were examined over six elements: theory knowledge, lecture, instructional boat dive, surface teaching, project dive and OWI critique.

The lecture is a 15 min presentation on a topic set by the examiner two weeks in advance of the event, in Mel's case the title was ‘diving from hard boats’. It is up to the student to decide what areas to cover and in what format. Mel ‘built’ a hard boat in the classroom, complete with engine noises provided by the class and explained kitting up and entry to the water. She got a merit.

*TLA—Three Letter Acronyms

The instructional boat dive covers a typical lesson that you might have to give e.g. first DSMB lesson. These are not always expected, as during the course I was given 'first cave dive'. It sounds harder than it really was – 'first stick your head under an overhang dive' would have been a more accurate title. Titles for each lesson were given the evening beforehand.

Surface teaching covers all the periods before, between and after dives – you are expected to take all the 'teaching opportunities' that arise and teach everything from chart work, to anchoring, to knots, to marshalling and even in one case how to relieve yourself off the back of a rib. Really. Dave's little outburst occurred during this part of the exam whilst he was boat handling and was 'told' to do something that he was mildly averse too – "I am the ***** cox'n which means I'm in ***** charge."

The project dive is where as a group of 3 divers you are given a set project. Tobias and his team had to 'Run a navigation workshop' – the only other guidance being that there '... should be 3 distinct sections, each lasting 20 mins and initiated by marking the surface. Pilotage and compass work must be included.' The rest was up to the group to

figure out. Titles for the project dive were given the evening beforehand.

The OWI critique was sprung on each student partway through the boat dive. The instructor stops the lesson, teaches something like compass work very badly and then you have to teach it back correctly. Once on the surface you have to debrief the examiner as if they were a new OWI – explaining how they should have taught the lesson.

But enough of the detail - I know that what you all really want to hear about are the ridiculous stories. There were many. One student wanted to demonstrate that the valve on a tank with a free flow gets cold, so with it facing the class he cracked it full open – blowing papers everywhere – and then let the tank fall over and fly around the floor. After apologising for letting it get out of control he did it all over again. One student sent the examiner flying by putting the boat into fast forward too quickly. One student didn't know how to use a compass, couldn't put a shot line together, forgot the buddy check in the exam and nearly crashed the boat. I keep saying one student because this was all one student. To quote Dave "Why is it that I always end up with the right Numpty?" This guy believes that he only failed because of Dave – hence why after 6 days working in the same team Dave's patience was running low.

Overall I enjoyed the course and in a way that I'm struggling to explain I came away

a little inspired. The quality of the National Instructors that were teaching us was excellent, they all worked extremely hard and clearly tried to help everyone to improve and pass the exam. The course is very well organised, the local contact George is great and for those single men in the club he has a very good-looking daughter. I felt that working in the same group all week was something that needs to be looked at. My group was very easy going, which meant that we had a huge advantage over others. Our planning was usually finished by 9pm whilst some groups were up until past 1am. Having been less than supportive of Dave in my article so far I should point out that part of his stress was caused by the fact that of all the students and instructors on the course he was clearly the most experienced boat handler. Seeing inexperienced students being taught bad habits on the basis of 'local practice' was something that he rightly challenged.

I'm sure as you talk to the 4 of us over the next few weeks you'll hear a lot more, but to finish I'd like to share with you a few of the analogies that we heard several times over:

'Always talk in support of your actions not instead of'

'Theory is all very well but at 30m

the text books just get soggy – you must be practical'

'If you are doing something then you can be teaching something'

But my favourite is 'teaching opportunities' which was the stock phrase of Dave's favourite team member. By half way through the week Dave was visibly twitching at the phrase – by the flight home he was threatening to stab anyone who uttered it. I am torn, but perhaps it could be time for us to move on from Dave 'the skid' Marks to the new Dave 'teaching opportunity' Marks. Try it when you are next down the club – but probably from a distance and not whilst he has anything sharp or heavy in reach.

For those of you who are still thinking about doing a combined event the best advice I can give is to be prepared. The money you pay guarantees a high level of teaching on the course, but not the qualification. Apart from the 100% success for London Branch only 50% of the remaining AI candidates passed. The rest have to do the whole thing again. If you want to know about the OWI combined event then talk to Ian Hill who successfully did it last year.

I have a little quiz to finish. We were all given a written report on our performance from which come the following extracts.

Can you put names to comments?

"Try not to be too dogmatic and condescending....."

“For a big bloke you are very unthreatening.....”

“You have a natural vitality.....but

try to talk less.....”

“It is good manners to remain awake during other student presentations.....”

YAHOO! GROUPS

Please join the new London No.1 Branch Yahoo! Group

If you are a current member of the Branch, you should have already received an e-mail inviting you to join our new Yahoo! Group. We are hoping to make good use of the Group to improve communication within the Branch. However, to make this as effective as possible, we need you - yes that's you - to sign up.

It only takes a couple of clicks to register. You won't get any spam from the list (in fact you can select which e-mail address you use or even choose not to receive any emails at all - you can just look at the list on the web whenever suits you if you like).

So please, dig out that e-mail. The invite was valid for 30 days, so if that's run out, or you deleted it, or you'd like another one, please send me an e-mail, and I'll send you another invite. Or you can join straight from the web. Just visit **<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/londonbranch/>** and click on box labelled “Join this Group!”.

Go on, please make my life easy and sign up **RIGHT NOW!**

Joe

am i doing it right?



Personal dive kit and its evolution over time is an emotive and controversial topic. As we mutate from the ugly duckling that is an Ocean Diver to the graceful swan that is an Advanced Instructor our kit also mutates - but the reasons for this can be far from obvious. This year I have dived regularly in the company of three people that I consider to be at very different points on the dive kit scale. At one end, frolicking like a seal, is the diver to whom kit is just a means to an end. At the other, frog kicking with metronomic precision, is the diver to whom kit is an end in itself. Somewhere in between is my other somewhat dogmatic and occasionally condescending dive buddy. Yet while their styles are different their reactions when challenged on kit choice are the same. Divers as a whole may not know a Gucci from a Versace, but a Poseidon aficionado will spot a Scubapro from the very limits of visibility.

I first qualified as a PADI Open Water diver in 1990 in New Zealand, entirely in borrowed kit. I can remember one of the dive shop displays, a combo package of tank, reg and BCD - still a relatively new invention at the time. I had no concept of good, bad or indifferent kit - just that I wanted my own. But

it wasn't until 1991 when I joined my university dive club that I finally purchased my first goodies. For the princely sum of

£85 I got a mask, snorkel, fins, knife and wetsuit booties. All I considered at the time was that everything had to be blue. Shortly afterwards I also squeezed into my first semi-dry suit, also blue. (The size was 'short-large' - something that still makes Mel chuckle today.) The club supplied all the other kit I needed, with all diving being done in ABLJs. (For the newer divers in London Branch the latest BSAC manual still has pictures of divers wearing these uncomfortable horse collar shaped articles.)

In 1993 I did my first proper live-aboard trip to Scapa Flow. It was a learning experience - for comfort and safety (mainly comfort) I realised that I needed all my own kit. (Another important lesson was to rinse my Speedos after each dive before putting them on the radiator to dry.) On my return I bought a UK400R torch, a Buddy Commando BCD and an Apeks TX50 reg. The selection was quite easy - everyone in the club had the same BCD and torch; Mike's was doing a special dive show offer on TX50s. Given my limited budget and even more limited knowledge of kit I was lucky. It is all still with me and in working order, except for the semi-drysuit and booties. (The suit is down the clubroom if there are any other

short-large people who wish to borrow it – I seem to be taller and slimmer than I was at 21 years old.)

In 1995 I got a job and joined London branch. At last I had serious amounts of cash to spend on diving. I had my first DCS hit within months (Drastic Cash Shortage), fuelled by an inability to pass a dive shop without going in and buying something. I bought stuff - lots and lots and lots of stuff. Several slates, 2 different reels, a backup torch, a strobe, flag, SMB, DSMB, a backup DSMB, 2 more knives and more clips and things to attach other things to than was rational. At the time the trend was to wear everything – the more kit you displayed the more experienced you appeared to be. I looked like a Christmas tree. The most stressful part of any dive was checking yourself at the end to see if you still had everything. It was a splatter gun approach – I bought anything I hadn't already got and worked out where to put it later.

I did however buy two great articles of kit during this period – a Suunto Solution Alpha dive computer and a DUI compressed neoprene dry suit. The suit was the first one in the club, and I can still remember the dark looks and tutting when first presented at a dive site. These were the first two items that I had properly

researched and it shows. The suit is still in great condition and the computer only died after 700 dives. But when I say research it was nothing like as complicated as now. Only DUI and Northern diver did compressed neoprene and Suunto and Aladdin were the only real choices in terms of computers.

I qualified as a Club Instructor in 1997, with a spare mask, buddy line, lesson plan slates, tank banger, underwater hooter, whistle and a lifting bag added to the general clutter. Shortly afterwards I also passed my OWI – with the following suggestions from the assembled giants of the BSAC:

1. To fit a universal joint to my Octopus in order to allow easier use by my buddy.
2. To buy an air gun reg. attachment in order to make inflating DSMBs easier.
3. In order to stop losing items of kit – tie them to my BCD with lengths of curly elasticated string.

In 1998 I finally escaped my kit addiction, moving to Fiji to work as a diving instructor on an island 12 hours away from the nearest dive shop. I started to unburden myself of the accumulated clutter of the preceding few years. I trimmed my weight belt down to the absolute minimum, removed the danglies that caught on the coral and learnt only to take what was necessary for a particular dive. By the time

I left Fiji in 2000 I had at last learnt to dive properly – only 10 years after originally having qualified.

On my return to London branch I reverted to the basic single tank set up as before, albeit without the December 25th associations. I had the same dry suit, BCD and Apeks reg. I had done a straight new for old swap on the Suunto and had moved to split fins. (Very relaxing on the calves and ankles and an evolutionary advancement with which I was particularly happy.) But I was starting to do more diving in the 30m+ range and without even a pony as back up, the margin for error was getting thinner. I needed to upgrade my kit set up. However, the previous mechanics for successful evolution no longer held true. Blue was clearly not a viable selection methodology. Research had become a full time occupation due to the vast range of potential options - and only those people who can cruise the web for hours at a time (usually work time) seem to do properly. Additionally no one else was regularly doing deeper technical dives and I was now one of the people in the branch that others looked to for kit advice. I had to move into uncharted waters.

Finally we get to my current kit set up, an evolutionary leap to a brand new family tree and something that

has occupied more thought and caused more debates with my buddies than I ever thought possible. Debates that are still cutting into the profit line of my current employer on a daily basis. (Email is a huge blow to company productivity.) I decided to go for manifolded twins with an isolator. This was a trade off between an additional failure point (the isolator) and the ability to dive independent tanks should a problem develop with one tank. Twins also meant that unlike the pony set up I only require two regs., have more gas for only a little extra weight – and if one reg. does fail I still have access to all my gas. The choice of 12l tanks instead of 10's was decided based on ease of getting my underwater trim correct and being able to sit comfortably in the moments before a dive with the tanks resting on the bench/tube.

Reading the all the reg. tests that regularly fill the diving magazines it was clear that most top quality regs. provide similar reliability and performance. Having dived extensively abroad the availability of spare parts for Scubapro regs. compared to Apeks or Poseidon swung the balance. As for DIN or A clamp - if anyone remains unconvinced of the benefits of DIN over A clamp then give up diving now. (No I'm not getting any more technical than that, otherwise the tech-heads in the club will kick off.)

The choice of which wing to use was the most difficult and I went on a twin tank course (using 4 different set ups) and

visited 2 dive shows to look at all the options before finally settling on the Halcyon set up - very little fussiness, very hardwearing. And now we are into the details – hose lengths, hose routings, clips, type of manifold, reels, shoulder breaks, stowage of other ancillary equipment, whether to have boots on tanks etc. I have been tweaking and modifying and arguing all year and I have more to do.

To all but the most fanatical observer I now have a completely DIR set up – which is a very long way from where I thought I would be at the end of this process. From the very first time I heard the phrase Doing It Right (and even now) a part of me recoils from notion of a standard kit set up for everything. The irony is that I found myself at the dive show, credit card in hand, on the verge of purchasing a kit set up that I knew to

be inferior to my current one simply because I didn't want to be tagged as DIR. My other kit selections (blue, splatter gun etc) were bad – just to avoid a name tag would have been much worse.

Will this set up prove to be the next evolutionary dead end? Am I more of a dodo than a swan? Time will tell – but at least I have now learnt to take my time before I buy and to look at the whole picture rather than just fix one issue and create another.

Jamie

Note: I have mused on this article for quite a while. However, whilst our esteemed former editor Mr. Joe (and tonight's specialist subject on Mastermind is dive kit) Hesketh was in charge of this excellent publication I felt that a few too many interruptions "[Actually, I think you'll find

10 things I learnt in the farne islands



As a relatively new member of the club I found that the trip to the Farnes was the perfect place to learn about the club and diving, as well as somewhere to do some fantastic diving, so instead of the usual trip reports I decided to pass on my new found knowledge.

1. SMB'S

You can never have enough practise with an SMB. Possibly one of the first things I learnt (having found out what one was in Plymouth) as, after a dive to settle into the conditions (and the cold), I was handed an SMB and reel to look after. I also learnt that there is no way to get out of this duty until you are diving with a less experienced diver and can ask the famous question "Have you ever used an SMB before?".

There is no answer you can give to this to avoid being the SMB bearer. Not even snapping a supposedly indestructible reel will get you out of this duty, as I found, I was just handed a new reel at the beginning of the next dive.

2. FOOD

One of the most important land based activities is eating. It ranged from the daily all day breakfast, the perfect way to warm up between dives, to the fantastic lobster feast prepared by Nigel and Dave (with all their helpers) one night. It was the biggest and oldest lobster I have ever seen (apparently about 50 years old) and had to be de-clawed before cooking in a bucket. That was probably the first time I have seen my dinner merrily boiling away in a bucket.

Staying in the same house as Keith I also learnt how to get all the meat out of a crab, as every day there would be more crabs he had caught or acquired from fishermen to be cooked in a variety of pans, the baking tray being the most imaginative and interesting as the crab kept trying to escape along the work surface!

3. DRINK

The other important land based activity and a pleasant way to pass the evening was sampling the local tippie (Farne Islands Bitter) in the best pubs Seahouses and Beadnell had to offer. Special mention has to be given to Paul at this point who looked after the kitty all week and made sure that our glasses were always full so thank you from everyone for this service!

4. THERE IS NO DIGNITY IN DIVING

As we all have to find out at some point, whether it is being bent over so someone can put your weight belt on because you have forgotten to, diving in your waterproof having forgotten to take it off before kitting up, trying to haul yourself into the RIB, spitting into your mask, trying to get in and out of a wet wetsuit in a carpark or going out in the boat for the ride wearing possibly the least effective lifejacket in the world. *[Not to mention seasickness... Ed].*



5. SEALS

The main reason for diving in the Farnes is surely to “play” with the seals. We were luck enough to have them on at least 3 dives where they did everything from just swimming past and showing off their underwater skills to nibbling and playing with our fins and SMBs. It made those dives just magical, although they didn't like being looked at for some reason so you had to watch what was happening to your buddy. The juveniles were

particularly playful, a big fan of fin eating and showing off their acrobatics.

It is only seeing them so close you realise what skilful and fast swimmers they are, as well as realising how big they actually are, slightly scary when they get territorial and have a quick bite of your arm or leg. Luckily they are scared of one thing, torchlight, as Joe demonstrated with the light sabre on his dives (mind you most things were scared of that).

6. OTHER SEALIFE

There is lots more to the Farnes than seals as we saw on some of the other dives when we were not quite so distracted. We saw lots of crabs, some of which were edible ones and so went straight into the goodie bags along with a few lobsters. Richard and Nigel even managed to catch a flatfish in Richard's BC pocket! We didn't catch all of the sealife though, and left plenty of sea urchins, starfish, sprats, wrasse and even a few octopi for everyone else to look at.

7. WEATHER

All diving is dictated by the weather as we all know and apparently the likelihood of being blown out in the Farnes was very high. We were very lucky to get in 5 good days of diving before the inevitable happened on Friday and the wind changed to blow onshore. We dived in the rain, sun and wind and even saw a sunrise one morning thanks to Morgan's dive planning. Luckily the dive was excellent and justified the early start, although it did mean that the breakfast/lunch venue had to be changed as we were too early for our regular haunt!

8. GETTING TO KNOW PEOPLE

There is no better way to get to know the people in the club than to go on a trip, and if that is a week long trip, so much the better. Of course some people you will get to know better than others, and I now feel like I know Claire very well having shared a bed with her for a week and given and received a fair amount of cuddles in the middle of the night (sorry Claire!).

9. UK DIVING

This trip was only the second time I have dived in the UK, having learnt in a nice tropical place and I was very surprised by how good UK diving is. There is so much to see, not just the seaweed and occasional fish through the murk I had envisioned. The only thing I still have to get used to is the cold. The North Sea in September did not seem very attractive and I was ridiculed at work for even contemplating it but it was slightly warmer than I expected.

Now I just have to get used to having a dive dictated by whether you are shivering yet rather than how much air you have left. After that (and having to struggle in to a very wet and cold wetsuit most mornings) the drysuit has quickly made the top of my "kit to buy" list.

10. COMMUNICATION

This is vital whether you are trying to signal something to your buddy underwater or deciding whether the early morning dive will take place.

However, all communication can very quickly fail. The mobile phone signal is pretty much non-existent so at least one person had to leave their bed to find out whether the morning dive was actually taking place and then tell everyone else what the plan was. Also buddy signals tend to fall apart underwater if you are not careful, it is no good getting excited over something and trying to show them if your buddy has no idea what you mean (as we all found at some point).

We did learn some new signals on the surface, but knowing all the signals for different types of sharks was not that useful in the Farne Islands. Seal was usually just signalled by wide eyes and excited pointing, unless it was a baby seal in which case a mime of clubbing a baby seal was used by some people (no names mentioned!).

The Farnes was definitely a memorable trip for me and I am just sorry that the season is over so soon, but at least it ended on a high with lots of brilliant diving and on land experiences to rival those in the sea. Hopefully some of my new found knowledge will be put into use soon....

Hannah



and finally...

Quiz time again, and this issue London Diver has caught the Sudoku bug from regular puzzle master, Jamie

| | | | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| | | | Dave | Tobias | | | Bernie | Jim |
| | Joe | Keith | Megan | | | | | Dave |
| Jim | | | Bernie | | | Megan | | Richard |
| Morgan | | Bernie | | Richard | | | Jim | Keith |
| | | Richard | | Keith | Bernie | | | Tobias |
| | Dave | | Joe | | Jim | | | |
| Tobias | Richard | | | Joe | | | | |
| | | | | | | Morgan | | |
| | | | | | | | | |

For anyone who has been underwater for the last six months or so, the rules are very simple. Each of the nine committee members (Bernie, Dave, Jim, Joe, Keith, Morgan, Megan, Richard and Tobias) must appear once and only once in each of the nine columns, each of the nine rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

Tuesday evenings come along to...

THE PERSEVERANCE

for beer, food, news, gossip, etc.

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NW6 6UG

Photo credits: Paul Benson (pp. 11, 16 and 18), Dave Marks (Front cover), Tobias van Verdenburgh (pp. 4 and 5)

**Copy deadline for next issue:
Friday 14 January
2006**

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|----|----|-----|----|----|-----|-----|
| SWM | | NC | | SpM | | | | EC |
| SC | | | SM | | | | | |
| | | ID | SC | NC | | | | |
| EC | | | WC | | | | SWM | |
| | | | | PM | ID | | | WC |
| ID | | | | SWM | | | | |
| | SWM | | | | | | SpM | SC |
| SM | | | | | | | | |
| SpM | | | | | | PM | NC | SWM |

Each of the nine IALA buoys listed below must appear once and only once in each of the nine columns, each of the nine rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

The buoys are:

- NC North Cardinal
- EC East Cardinal
- SC South Cardinal
- WC West Cardinal
- PM Port Marker

- SWM Safe Water Mark
- ID Isolated Danger
- SM Starboard Marker
- SpM Special Marker



Q. What did the fish say when it swam into a wall?
A. Dam.



Q. Why did the lobster blush?
A. The sea weed.



He'll face 30ft waves, blizzards, force 9 gales and sub-zero temperatures.



Andy Haggitt: 2nd Coxswain and Deputy Mechanic, Eastbourne lifeboat.

Photography: Murray Langdon.

All we ask of you is £20.

R703/11

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£ _____ for Joint Shoreline membership (for partners - min £33 p.a.)
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£ _____ for Joint Governorship (for partners - min £118 p.a.)
£ _____ for Life Governorship (once-only payment - min £1,500)
£ _____ for Starn Force membership (under 16's - min £5 p.a.)

Please attach name, date of birth & sex of child

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Title _____ First name (in full) _____

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