

RATAE SAC



Newsletter April 2003

Web: <http://www.rataedivers.com>

Contact: Tel 01509 827232



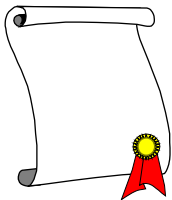
For many, Easter is the signal of a new season. This means that Wednesday evenings will be well attended at Stoney Cove by club members. Let Mark Hessey know if you intend going. If you don't have a buddy to dive with, let Mark know you need pairing up.

Pool fees

A reminder that pool fees went up as of April 1st. It now cost £2/£4 to use the pool on a Thursday evening. The new school term starts 1st May. Note that lectures have been brought forward to 7pm to allow for the new BSAC syllabus, with its overly long lectures.

RNLI talk

We will have a talk from the RNLI Lowestoft at the club on the 24th April. The class-room is booked for this evening (no pool session). All please turn up and find out what the RNLI do in the event of a diver incident. Bryan Spence has kindly organised this event.



QUALIFICATIONS

My sincere apologies go to Kev Wright, who also passed his Sports Diver while in Israel (sorry for missing you out last month!). Ted Tibenham has also passed his Sports Diver, but in the colder waters of Stoney.

TRIPS UPDATE



based.

The Weymouth trip is about a month away (4th & 5th May). Any late interest let Paul Lucas know ASAP. This trip is mainly shore

STONEY COVE DIVING



the week.

Diving activity at Stoney is becoming regular now. Ask around as many people are going down there, mainly in

Sport's Council

Not much to report from the Sport's Council. Pool fees will only be going up a small amount next year, so nothing to worry about. We were asked if any of us were interested in running days during the summer for kids snorkelling. If this interests anyone then let me know.

Diving Internet

This month I'm including on-line dive shops, mainly for our newer members.

<http://www.diverswarehouse.co.uk/> - Divers Warehouse, good for kit and suits
<http://onlinescuba.co.uk/> -Northampton shop with very good range of second hand and new kit
<http://www.roho.co.uk/> - Robin Hood, good for suits and special offers
<http://www.sdswater sports.co.uk/> - Sheffield based firm
<http://www.simplyscuba.co.uk/> - stock almost everything
<http://www.divingdirect.co.uk/> - Denny Diving, mate of mine swears by them, but they ain't cheap!
<http://www.kentdiving.com/>
<http://www.ukdiving.co.uk/ukdiving/classified/sell.htm> - second hand discussion board.

Before too long I will compile the survey of local dive shops.

Let me know??

Just a little moan. Please let me know of any news or anything you wish to bring to everyone's attention. Fancy writing something interesting for the newsletter? Let me know, even if it's just the usual Stoney dive day!

Ratae on Tour

One final piece for you. Thanks to Mark Hessey (what happened to Martin Crookes' write-up?) for a comprehensive write-up of the clubs first overseas trip, so it's over to Mark:

Ratae Divers on Tour: Eilat, Israel, February 2003- 04- 05

A water temperature of no less than 20 degrees, visibility of 30 metres plus, 5 mill semi-dry suits, no not Stoney Cove, but Eilat in Israel - the first overseas diving trip for the Ratae Divers.

From a personal perspective I still think about the great diving that we enjoyed – a couple of months after coming back I still think it was a superb experience.

An early morning start at Heathrow saw our first encounter with the famous, or should that be infamous El Al security, complete with police with machine guns. I can only think that the word officious sums up the dealings that we had before we even got to Israel.

However by the time we got to Eilat and our hotel we were ready for the first drink on foreign soil and a discussion about what we were going to see the next day. We were looking to see at least some lionfish, morays perhaps, and even rays, but we wanted to see lots of brightly coloured fish and coral.

The next morning we were picked up by our hosts Aqua-Sport, who have been providing diving at the site for over 20 years. Knowing that Martin Crookes had managed to negotiate as much air as we wanted into the price of the holiday meant that the 13 of us were all raring to get in and see what we had travelled for.

After a briefing we were introduced into the Israeli way of doing things – if we can't make you pay one way we will make up a rule tomorrow. All I can say is that if and when you dive abroad, make sure you have evidence of having dived at least within the last 6 months and have dived at least 20 dives. Otherwise you will have to go with one of their instructors – and they will want paying. With some emotional blackmail we managed to get most people to a state where Aqua-Sport were reasonably happy and we were not spending too much money with them.

So we kit up – the locals were impressed with our kit – especially the

Buddy stabs – which apparently are very expensive out there, so they must have thought we were loaded. We head for the water – we get in, not bad temperature wise, and then we take the plunge. Within a minute there was an octopus, just looking at us, minding its own business. I made the mistake of thinking if I have seen one so soon there must be loads – wrong! Never saw another one at all.

Finning towards a big rock Alison and I saw the first of a million fish that we encountered. A shoal of Scissor-Tail Sergeants seemingly took no notice of us and we carried on out. A rock, down at about 5 metres, was covered in various hard coral varieties and was surrounded by small golden coloured fish called Jewel Fairy Basslets. In and around the coral were Blue Sail-fin Tangs and trying to keep out of the glare of any divers there was a small Peppered Moray.

Swimming past a field of what looked like weeds in the sand until they disappeared (Red Sea Garden Eels) we encountered a diverse range of fish such as White Tail Triggerfish, various types of parrotfish and wrasse.

As the week went on, we also saw little ringed pipefish, the venomous lionfish and the clear-fin lionfish, racoon butterflyfish, the almost impossibly thin Cornetfish (must be the Kate Moss of the fish world) and we were even lucky enough to see 5 barracuda swim by. Possibly the best photo we took was of a small giant moray with attendant Blue-steak cleanerfish. Hiding underneath some vivid red coral it was only about 3 feet long, but was big enough to take our breath away. Our last dive of the week we managed to also see a snowflake moray (quite rare apparently)

and a scalloped torpedo ray (which gives off an electric shock if stood on).

But what about any wrecks? There were two house wrecks that were reasonably easy to get to and were at 20 and 30 metres. Both wrecks were in good condition, buoyed, and could be seen from the surface! At certain times a yellow mouthed moray would greet the divers on the 30 metre gunship, but would disappear if there were too many divers around. The 20 metre wreck of a small cargoship was host to weight belts falling off and even a bit of boy on boy action! No names to protect the guilty!

Possibly the highlight for the divers and non-divers was the trip to Dolphin Reef, just up the coast from the dive centre. Diving with these animals was a real treat and I didn't hear one person say that it was not worth the money. Photos and videos prove that we all seemed to have a really good time and gave us a new respect for these intelligent and playful creatures. I think we can all agree that having seen a dolphin swim at full speed we wouldn't want to be in its way.

Is that all you did all week you may be asking. The answer was a resounding no! There was, in no particular order:

- Camel riding – Sheikh Mick looked born for the part and Marie found out what it was like to ride on a racing camel. There was authentic tea and pitta bread and cheese snacks, made by someone who really loved his camels – those of you who were there know what I mean.
- Jeep Safari – Ray said that this was the best bit of knee trembling action he had had for ages.
- The Underwater Observatory – had a good selection of jewellery and saw some hot cash and credit card

action – oh and there was some swimming things in there as well according to the ladies who went.

- Trip to Jerusalem – not the pub in Nottingham, but the real thing. Apparently a lot of it was shut but that meant that Brian and Judith were able to see the sites such as the Wailing Wall without too many tourists around.
- Petra – the city that “is as red as a rose and as old as time” was a day trip to Jordan, complete with body searches and 2 lots of customs, was very special and as there was little tourism in Jordan at the time there was hardly any other people there. I would recommend the trip to anyone.
- Taba – not content with diving in Eilat, Ray also went diving in Taba in Egypt, and thought the diving was even better than at Eilat.
- Restaurants – different restaurants were available in Eilat and included an American eat as much as you want diner, an underwater restaurant

where they chase you for a tip, and the Thai restaurant next to the hotel where a warm welcome was given.

To sum up I would say that the diving in Israel was an excellent introduction to diving in warm water – it had everything that you could possibly want, fish, wrecks, good weather, good facilities, close to the hotel and also had other things to do instead of or after the diving.

I would just like to add my thanks to Martin Crookes who organised the trip and did a sterling job of making sure everyone knew what was happening; to the ladies, Maria, Jean, Judith and Chris who marshalled so well and kept everyone logged; and to the divers, Brian, Mick, Martin T, Alison, Cherie, Ian, Kev, Rachel, Karl, and Ray.

I know that I am looking forward to our next trip – the hard bit is deciding where to go.

EVENTS CALENDAR

TRIPS CALENDAR 2003			
16 th April 2003	Stoney Cove		Mark Hessey
3 rd /4 th MAY 2003	WEYMOUTH TRIP		Paul Lucas- names to Paul early in New Year.
7 th May 2003	Stoney Cove		Mark Hessey
21 st May 2003	Stoney Cove		Mark Hessey
4 th June 2003	Stoney Cove		Mark Hessey
18 th June 2003	Stoney Cove		Mark Hessey
2 nd July 2003	Stoney Cove		Mark Hessey
5 th /6 th July 2003	Plymouth trip	£89	Mark Hessey- FULL
16 th July 2003	Stoney Cove		Mark Hessey
6 th August 2003	Stoney Cove		Mark Hessey
16 th /17 th Aug 2003	Anglesey trip	tbc	Ian Petchey
October	FARNE ISLANDS		Rod Hill
September 2004	Scapa Flow	??	Mark Willoughby / Rob Cuss