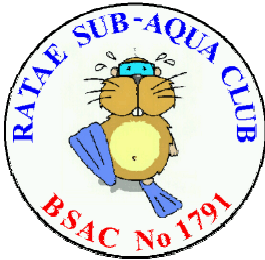


RATAE SAC



Newsletter March/April 2003

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I have to start off with an apology. I decided to update my home computer and managed to lose MS Word. By the time it was fixed, it was almost time for another newsletter, so sorry for not getting any news out last month.

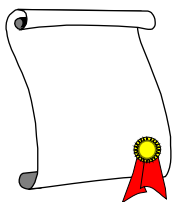
Well Easter has arrived, which for many signals the start of a new diving season. For the club the year looks good, with a new wreck to dive in Plymouth, a return to Pembroke, the Farnes & Anglesey, and a new attraction at Stoney (a Tank). So it should be a good year ahead.

In this month's issue we have a bit of news, a write up of the sinking of HMS Scylla, and no less than 2 write-ups of the club's latest holiday.

Training

Our club training is going well. We have two trainees ready for open water and others close behind.

QUALIFICATIONS



Graham Hunt has passed his Ocean Diver theory exam, congratulations to him.

Trips



Many of the club trips are filling up nicely, with limited places left on most. Contact the organizers if you are interested.

Congratulations

We have had an experienced diver in Peter Bailey join our club. Soon after his joining, his wife gave birth to their second child, a boy. All at Ratae welcome Peter and congratulate him and his wife on their new arrival.

Pool news

The pool is closed for the Easter break. Next diving night is 22nd April.

Kit news

A mixture of good and bad news. The club has now purchased two more sets of Apex regs for open water use and air-sharing exercises in the pool. At the same time, we seem to have lost a set of Apex regs. If you know where these regs are then let Graham or me know. The lending of kit is currently under review to make sure no more kit walks off. Some kit has been borrowed without clearing it with Graham and some people have not been paying for the loan of kit. This will now have to stop as we find ourselves short of kit and a bill to replace lost kit. We also need kit to be

returned much quicker during the term time. If you borrow kit for a mid week daytime dive or night dive, we need the kit back on the Thursday. If this is not possible, kit loan may be refused.

DCI Tests

Lesley sent me the following:

You might like to know that after months of negotiation re the PFO tests I want - Nottinghamshire NHS Trusts have decided NOT to any requests for referral for tests for divers following a DCI in the absence of acute signs and symptoms.

I.E. they will foot the bill for emergency treatment but not anything that helps determine the safety of future diving.

How long before other NHS trusts follow suit? I know most of our members live in the Leics area but it is worth letting people know!!

The test costs about £130 as opposed to the £50,000 future recompression Treatment may cost!!!!

Trip Write-ups

Plymouth – HMS Scylla – Rob Cuss

After a week of indecision, I decided to go down to Plymouth with Lynne to see the Scylla sink. Having spent a week on holiday in Whitsand Bay last summer, I knew we'd have to get there early, so we set out at 6 am (I was late). We got to our destination by 10:30 and the place seemed a bit quiet. The Scylla was in place by this time and we found a good vantage point. By about 1pm we were both glad we'd left early as the tiny little coastal road was packed.

We sat listening to BBC Devon (not recommended), who did their best in

getting information out. Coming up to detonation time, there was plenty of activity on board. Eventually they all finished whatever it was they were doing and soon after 3pm, the first of two flares was let off to signal 5 minutes to go. This was followed 4 minutes later by a second flare and the crowd's anticipation grew. The radio seemed void of useful information as a minute later nothing happened. We sat and waited and after another minute or so, an explosion went off on board, followed a few seconds later by a pyrotechnical display (all for show of course) – as seen in the photo.



The Scylla slowly sank and in three minutes was sitting on the sea floor. We packed up our things and went home. It's fair to say the journey home was slower, taking three hours just to reach Plymouth (would have been quicker to walk!). Well worth the trip.

Check out:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/devon/news_features/2004/scylla_sinking.shtml if you missed the sinking.

Trip to Hurghada, Egypt

I usually have to pester to get write-ups, but this time I got sent two! No bias, so you get both.

DOLPHINS, TURTLES AND AN EARLY MORNING WAKE-UP CALL! – Martin Tongue

We left a cold and snowy England, via Gatwick Airport, where we met Laurie Evans, the final member of our party, bound for the sun of Hurghada, Egypt and a weeks boat diving. Travelling “Cattle Class” with Excel Airways – we were spoiled last year flying with El Al- we were a little cramped to say the least. This time though without the Israeli Inquisition.

Our hotel this year was the Empire Beach Resort with gardens and, yes, a beach! After sorting out our rooms, a meal and a few beers we went our separate ways, some to their rooms, some to do a little exploring. Four of us ventured further into Downtown Hurghada where we encountered for the first time bartering Egyptian style. Although we didn’t buy this time “Arafats” – the Arabian headgear started off at 40LE (Egyptian pounds) but we ended up at a price of 8LE!

And so to bed, only to be woken at 4:30 a.m. by the Muezzin at the local Mosque, calling his flock to prayer. This was the pattern, for some, for the entire week!

We were met later that morning by Nick from Easy Divers, our hosts for the week, and Mohammed, the driver, to whom Road Rage came easy! Mick makes friends instantly with Mohammed – but not like the Arnie & Danny of last year.

Straight to the boat, the Abu Taleb, where we met Les Sanders, a PADI Dive Master from Essex who would be with us for the week and Nabil, the second Dive Leader and the and out to

sea. After sorting our kit, Nick briefed us on our weeks diving, with great emphasis placed on H.E.P.C.A. (Hurghada Environmental Protection & Conservation Association), which was the final item of every Dive Briefing.

Our first dive was a checkout dive to see how competent we were. On surfacing the wind had strengthened, which on our way to the next dive site, made some of us change colour to a greyish green and some “chumming” was involved! Large Cornet fish, Moray eel, Lionfish, Frog fish and a SHARK – no sorry, it was a Grouper!

Haggling in the Bazaar we nearly bought the shop!

Seller: 10LE

Mick: 5

Seller: 7

Mick: 3!!!

The shop owner must have thought it was Christmas, Easter and his Birthday rolled into one when we bought “Arafats”, Hoodies and other trinkets for ten of us in one go.

Turtles and flying fish spotted on the surface on the way to dive sites and “turdles” at the surface interval – a new meaning to Poo Sticks!

Forget “Plan the Dive, Dive the Plan”. After spotting a pod of Dolphins on the surface between dives, three of us Dived the Plan and missed them but the others took a different bearing and were buzzed by 7 Dolphins for a while – ask a very excited Cherie – until an over eager Norwegian, in his excitement to be near them, chased them off.

The sea was very rough and most cried off the night dive, not wanting to lurch back out to sea again. Mick and Martin

said it was one of the best night dives they had been on.

The second dive on the wreck Excalibur saw Mick, Martin, Kev, Ian and myself playing “Navy Seals”, over the side of a rib on the count of three, at speed as we approached the shot line

After diving over the best Coral Gardens we have ever seen, Les Sanders and myself surface 150 yards from our boat – there were over a dozen boats to choose from, and they shuffle the boats while you are under water – we surface swim 150 yards to the wrong boat only to be told our boat is 300 yards away in the opposite direction. A nice day for a surface swim! Nick the Dive Guide is relieved as we reach our boat, half an hour after the others. He was about to launch a search & rescue operation! (Mental note: Find out, and remember, the name of your day boat for future reference)

On another dive where Blue Spotted Rays were plentiful we surfaced to find the boats shuffled once again. This time though Kev Wright and Laurie Evans had surfaced on the opposite side of the reef from the boat, having taken a wrong bearing and nudging 50 bar on surfacing, and the boat had gone to pick them up.

On most dives on Marine, our second boat of the week, Moustapha, our dive guide for the rest of the week would say, “Maybe we see Dolphins, maybe we see Turtle, and don’t forget H.E.P.C.A. (Hurghada Environmental Protection etc. etc.). and we all thought ,“Yeah! Yeah! (yawn)” after several disappointments. Well on this particular dive as we crested another beautiful Coral Garden, there it was, surrounded by a Coral picket fence, a TURTLE having lunch at about 12 metres.

H.E.P.C.A. washed away with the current as Moustapha, gauges and octopus dangling, and Adje, a Dutchman who was never at the back of the queue and didn’t mind who he knocked out of the way to get to the front, crashed into the Coral picket fence, photographing and videoing this turtle, which must have been nearly three feet along the shell. After five minutes or so, the turtle got bored with us all watching him lunching and gracefully “flew” away with the stragglers from our party, who had not seen it lunching, chasing after it into the blue beyond.

The final boat dive of the holiday saw us on a three-pinnacle reef with two channels. Returning towards the boat, John was getting low on air, so Nick took him back to the boat, indicating its whereabouts to the remaining four, who all took a compass bearing. After exploring further until we were on about 70 bar we headed for the boat on the same bearing. Where was the boat? We did a mid water safety stop at 5 metres. Still no sign of the boat. One of us surfaced, spun round to find the boat. We were 150 metres away. Indicating the direction of the boat to those below, the surface swimmer struck out for the boat. It turned out that, as well as shuffling the boats, Nick had given the bearing from the first channel and we were in the second channel and he and John had missed the boat by 50 metres!

The “rest day” saw us in the water at 7:30 a.m. on a shore dive from the hotel, on the house reef, looking for the sea horses which abounded there – but they had been rustled over night! The rest of the day was spent in the sun where last years Dive Marshals, Jean and Maria, had spent the week, or Quad biking up to the “Genuine Bedouin Camp”. The

intrepid Maria did venture off on a very long days Tour to Luxor, visiting 3 of the 7000 tombs in the area.

The dive centre, Easy Divers and their staff, especially Nick, who suffered the most (How was Sasha?), were very good and would do anything to please and didn't move the goal posts like Aquasports did last year to get more money out of us. The hotel however did have different bars and restaurants for the All Inclusive guests and set times for various dishes – 15:00 'til 16:00, chips, 16:00 to 17:00 no chips – cack (cake). Beers at the start of the week came in "twos" – pints, if you asked, but only halves after the first day. Sprints came in good measures especially if you ordered at the end of a bottle! The restaurant always found us a table for ten, on one occasion, thrusting the handbag of a Russian lady into her hand, mid sweet course, and telling her and her husband to find another table. We all covered with embarrassment!

The week was over all too soon and we were back on board Excel Airways "Cattle Class" to Gatwick.

Next years proposed Red Sea Liveaboard became questionable after spending only 8 hours per day in rough seas – but who knows?

On the whole the diving was very good and suitable for the least experienced diver on the boat – as it should be, but I felt we, as a club, would have been happier with dives that were a little more challenging and, with a maximum depth reached of 22 metres, deeper!

My thanks go to Mick Ward and Martin Crookes who organised the trip, to Ian and Cherie, John, Kev, Laurie, Jean and Maria, for making sure there was never a dull moment during the week.

Hurghada – Egypt Trip Report - 2004 – Ian & Cherie

At a meeting before this years Red Sea club trip everything was finalised; who was travelling with who, times and pick up points, directions and addresses. On the evening before the flight out, as planned, we had all assembled at the Europa Hotel in Crawley – just a fifteen-minute bus transfer away from Gatwick South Terminal. Time now for a few drinks to get us into the holiday mood and for Mick to bemuse and astound us with his magic coins tricks!

After a 'cosy' flight out we land at Hurghada, the main building looking more like one of Chipperfields circus big tops than an airport, but we fill in and pay for our entry visas and have a short coach journey to the Empire Beach Resort where we are staying.

Each morning we are picked up by suicide mini-bus drivers and taken to where the day boat departs from, approximately ten minutes down the coast (five if you drive on both sides of the road plus the middle and beep your horn constantly!)

Our diving for the week was focused mainly around the many shallow reefs about one and a half hours off the coast - just past the Gifatin Islands. Accessible only by boat we usually had the reefs to ourselves, sometimes we had to share with other boats but either way it was a lot quieter than Stoney Cove. From the first orientation dive and throughout the next seven days the sea life is **everywhere**. Coral, fish, rays, eels, dolphins and turtle - it's like watching 'Blue Planet' in real life. For two days the journey out to the dive sites can be best described as 'a bit choppy' – two metre plus swells with the boat achieving 45 degrees either side of

vertical, it certainly tested the breakfast retaining qualities of our stomachs thoroughly. Once on the reef though and in shallower water the boat rocked gently enabling us to enter and exit safely, our resident 'crazy' chef in the galley providing us with a dinnertime meal as well as tea and coffee between dives. As the week progressed, the weather got warmer, the seas calmer and the chances of dive guide Nick scoring with Sasha higher (I wonder how he got on without our tactful help and advice!)

Other highlights of the week included Mick and Martin C's night dive, an old live aboard wreck that we did twice, the fastest rib dive ever, Captain Mick's boat handling, quad biking in the desert, John's quest for Viagra, Sodoff the cat and some donkey's genitals cooking slowly outside a shop in the rough part of town. Egypt is **so** colourful!

Easy Divers and their staff were great, quite well organised and flexible if you wanted to change the itinerary. I'd certainly book with them again.

Our thanks go to Martin C, Mick & Maria for organising the diving, hotel accommodation and transfers.

Locations dived during the trip

- 13/3/04 Marsa Abu Galawa Reef
- 13/3/04 Fanadeer Reef
- 14/3/04 Fanous Reef (East)
- 14/3/04 Fanous Reef (East)
- 14/3/04 Fanadeer Reef (night dive)
- 15/3/04 'Excalibur' wreck
- 15/3/04 Gota Abu Ramada (East)
- 15/3/04 Gota Abu Ramada (West)
- 16/3/04 Torfu Abu Nougat Reef
- 16/3/04 Aruk Abu Nougat Reef
- 17/3/04 'Excalibur' wreck
- 17/3/04 Eark Sabiwa Reef
- 17/3/04 Torfa Ben Elgebel Reef
- 18/3/04 'Easy Divers' House Reef

Cheers

Ian & Cherie

Rob Cuss

TRIPS CALENDAR 2004			
May 2004	Pembroke training weekend		Martin Crookes
10 - 11 th July 2004	Plymouth	£89	Paul Lucas
14 - 15 th August 2004	Anglesey	£70	Ian Petchey
30 - 31 st October	Farnes	~£100	Rod Hill
22 nd April 2004 +	Hind Leys	Thursday evening diving	