

The Seahorse Dive Club Newsletter

Editor's Note

Welcome to the June edition of the White Horse Dive Club newsletter. The summer is finally here and we have the weather to boot. In fact the visibility off the south coast is improving with some reports this weekend (2 Jul) of over 15m visibility in some places off Weymouth.

The nice weather usually means planned trips can be completed. This edition has several trip reports from recent forays to the salty stuff; a report from Scapa Flow by Marcus Sanderson and from the trip to Porthkerris a report from Malcolm Cole.

Having just spent a day down at Vobster where I met a few of the club regulars in near 30° temperatures, I can say that it was the first time that I have jumped in Vobster to keep cool, all the diving I have done there recently has kept me out of the water to keep warm when the water temperature was between 3-10°! More of the same please.

If you are arranging anything over the next month, please try and submit a report and if you have pictures, all the better.

Welcome to...

Clare Klomp who has renewed her membership from last year, welcome back...keep in touch with Mark and the committee to find out when the trips are...

July 2006

Tip of the Month

There are a few members of the club who have basic digital cameras (not you Mike, yours are anything but basic!) who shoot in the green UK waters. The following set of tips is to make the most of those shots which you don't think will look that good – convert them to monochrome to add impact.

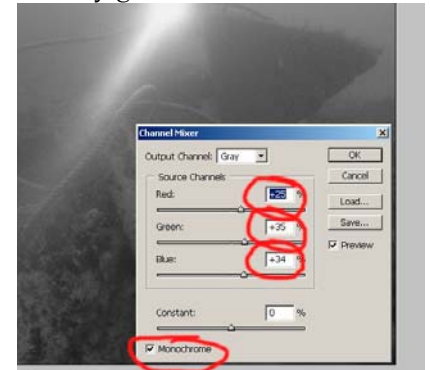
This shot was taken at the start of May in Plymouth.



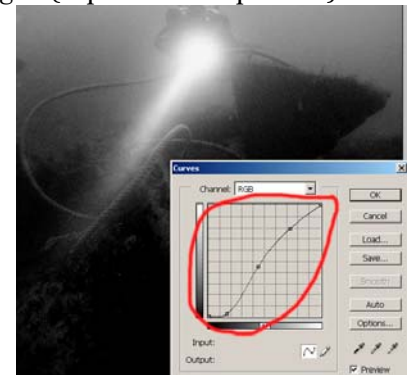
Taken at 20m there is plenty of natural light to make the shot 'green'. The shot was taken on an Oly-5050 without a strobe; 2 reasons for this – 1, I don't own one and the 2, distances would have been too great for this shot anyway. Whilst the colour version looks okay, converting it to monochrome certainly adds impact.



The following screen grabs should help you get somewhere close with your shots. The best way convert to mono is to use the Channel Mixer tool (Image>Image Adjustments>Channel Mixer) and select some value which add up to approx 100, the ones here are 25, 35, 34. Once the channel numbers have been selected, remember to select 'Monochrome', the image will go monochrome but it still isn't very good.



Add some contrast using the Curves tool (Image>Image Adjustments>Curves) and create an S-shape in the curve by picking up the points with mouse and moving them. To add contrast you want to add more dark (bottom of the S downwards) and add more light (top of the S upwards).



These grabs are from Photoshop but most other tools will allow you to something similar and the best way to learn is to play – just make sure you have saved a copy of the original!!

Forthcoming Trips

UK – Following on from a successful trip to Scapa Flow, Phil Green is thinking of organising a trip to Scapa or Normandy next year but needs to see what interest there is. Contact Phil for more information.

Overseas – Steve Cain and his bunch had a fairly successful trip to the Red Sea (no report though ;) and Steve is thinking about chartering a boat next summer as a dedicated video/photography dive boat. Costs are in the region of £1000 for the week and 10 people are needed to get any discounts. The trip is as per Steve's itinerary and so you have a choice as to where to dive. Contact Steve if you are interested.

Trip Reports...

PorthKerris, 9-12 June 2006, Malcom Cole

The journey down to Cornwall was not too bad especially as we stopped off at a vineyard for a drink on the way. Staying at the "Eden House" B&B (St Kevern's Old Vicars house) next to the church was perfect as we were close to all the important amenities e.g. the 2 pubs! Also Porth Kerris Divers are just a short drive down the road. Thursday night saw us all meeting in "The Three Tuns" pub where some others of our 15 strong party were staying. The others came up from Porth Kerris Divers where they were camped or caravanning.

Friday morning arrived and the news was not good due to the high winds. So it was decided that a trip over to Sennen Cove on the north coast might provide some decent

conditions. We soon had ourselves a convoy winding its way across Cornwall. Sennen Cove turned out to be a beautiful bay whose waters were a gorgeous azure blue. But it did not provide us with diving opportunities. We took solace in a café overlooking the bay and joined the tourists walking over the hills and on the beach. The local boatmen did offer us dive for Saturday if we could not find alternatives.

Unfortunately Porth Kerris did not seem able to offer us any diving with any certainty so Mark contacted several dive boat skippers from Diver magazine's classifieds and due to happy coincident Shaun's dive boat "My Redeemer" was available so at that night's pub meal saw us planning for an early start on Saturday morning in Falmouth's docks.

Saturday 10th June

Saturday morning saw 15 bleary eyed diver types arriving at the docks in Falmouth only to find the parking was for 3 hours max. Let's start a campaign to get these tiresome unfriendly diving parking rules amended or better removed altogether!

"My Redeemer" could hold a max of 12 divers so Mike, Paul, Malcolm, Claire, Calhoun and Ross stayed behind whilst the first wave went out and did 2 dives. The East Narrows and SS Stanwood. When they arrived back the on shore group had already had their kit ready and waiting. Efficiently (!) we swapped the gear and were on the short journey to our dive site.

Shaun dropped the anchor on the wreckage of what he told us was the SS Stanwood a coal carrying vessel.

After thinking we were not going

to get a dive at all, being in the sea at last was a good feeling.

Diving later in the day meant there was more of a current such that, as Shaun stated, we needed to tie-up to the shot line and then finned off. It was empty for the first 20 m so Paul & I turn 180°C and swam back on past the shot. Here we came upon the wrecks spills on the sea bed. There was quite a bit of small marine life and this was good enough for me on our fist dive of the weekend. Visibility was about 2m but quite a lot of light. A torch was only really needed for the overhangs of the wrecks of which there were plenty. A good dive and one whose end provided another first for me: I exited the sea on a lift!



Skipper Shaun in the wheelhouse of "My Redeemer" looking on as Mark apologizes for sneezing over him!!

"My Redeemer" is a fully equipped dive boat with the luxury of a lift at the back of the vessel. As the sea was only ever slight when we dived it was an easy exit. I am not so sure that in a heavy swell the same could be said.

That evening in the pub there were notably more smiles on the faces of "that crowd of divers from up north". We were all especially happy that Shaun's boat was going to be available to us on the Sunday & the Monday too. We all went to bed (some sooner than others...) looking forward to the next days diving.

Sunday 11th June

As Clair, Calhoun & Ross were going with Porth Kerris to complete Ross' Nitrox course, the boat was able to stay out for two dives so we had no "Shore-Party" to be car park attendants watchers so all the vehicles had to be ferreted away to a long stay car park.



The Porth Kerris Rib with Ross Cahoon & Clair on board. Not sure where the dog is going!

Once loaded and the drivers returned we left Falmouth soon after 9:00am. The day was fine and the sea state was slight.

Again aboard "My Redeemer" skipper Shaun took us to the 1st Dive site NG Peterson.

Down the shot line took about 2 or 3 minutes and we were on the wreckage of the steel carrying boat. Paul spotted a white conger eel, or at least the head of one; it was very well concealed so that is all we saw. But the head indicated this was no youngster but a full size adult. Later we saw a half eaten body of a dog fish - looked like Pete Dunn could not wait for the night's meal in the pub.



Tony's glasses enable you to see you're your buddy when you're below and you're your buddy is on the boat

We turned back on ourselves and soon found the shot line and did a steady safety stop during which time Scotty & others came up the line and we all once again to advantage of the lift.

Second dive that day was onto the SS Volnay which I first dived in August '97 and then July 1999. But this time was much more relaxed than either of my previous dives here. A hundred dives or so make a lot of difference in how you view a dive. Again we went down the shot and were soon at the anchor. The wreck site was immediately apparent - the ribs of the super-structure clearly visible. There was no current and this made movement around the site a pleasure. All my dive equipment was really working well and whilst diving will never be really easy this was total pleasure.

The marine life sort of paled into the background against the very large boilers. I would estimate them as being about 12 feet in diameter and still remarkably intact. Amongst the ribs there was a very long pollock - estimate it at around 3 feet. Lots of fish life; for me of particular note was the 100mm long light blue bodied fish with gold bands along its length a male cuckoo wrasse - beautiful colours that perhaps we do not recognise enough as being in UK waters..

We tootled around the anchor line for a little longer not wanting to leave until safety insisted we should so we surfaced after a good long dive.

Monday 12th June

For the last time this holiday we got to the harbour in Falmouth, behind Trego Mills at 9am. With the kit out of the cars the drivers parked their cars. We soon left once again on Shaun's "My Redeemer". This time we were only a body of 12 true souls etc. Claire, Calhoun & Phil found that work beckoned them back at home and had to leave the previous night. The dive sites were to the north of Falmouth a change from yesterdays which were all to the south of the harbour.

The first dive was "The Buzzies". I wanted to rename it Dead Mans' fingers reef - never seen so many in one reef. Paul & I saw 3 dog fish and all of them were a good size of about a metre long. Long dive and whilst not lots of fish life to see it was a very colourful site made up of large boulders absolutely covered in colour and made for a really good dive.



Ross proclaiming the fish he had seen was '...this big...'

The second dive just over an hour later was the SS Hera. At first this seemed just a small well broken wreck standing vertically from the sea bed but it was also laid out over the sea bed. What was really good about this site was its size - just

nice to fin over 2 or 3 times and have a really good look. Tony Curtis caught a blue conger eel on camera but we never got to see it unfortunately. We also saw a 1m Pollock amongst the super structure with a cleaning shrimp on its head. Later, on top of a metal pole I spotted a large crab clinging on with its "antennae" feeding in the water, quite oblivious to these divers invading its peace & quiet.

After 30 minutes had plenty of air but the temperature of just 13 centigrade was really too much so we both decided to come up. We did our safety stop before getting onto the lift on the back of My Redeemer for the last time this year.

On the whole it was thanks to Mark ringing around Cornwall's dive crews we managed to snap "success from the jaws of defeat". The long weekend proved once again that The Seahorse Dive Club can muster a small army of dedicated divers that want to enjoy the spectacular sights the UK dive sites have to offer.

Scapa Flow, June 2006, Marcus Sanderson

The islands north of Scotland have been an area of the world I have been interested in visiting for a long time. Having parents who lived in the Shetlands I for one reason have wanted to go to this area to put pictures to the descriptions of life on these islands. The second reason and the same reason many divers visit this region each year is to visit a body of water situated between the ring of islands known as the Orkneys which contained within the depths of these waters are the remains of a scuttled German fleet.

Ideas were put into action, a trip was arranged and 9 people including myself, Emma Moore, Phil Green and Sue Meakin, were on their way to Scapa. (Graham was due to come away with us but broke his foot a week before departure).

Following a days driving and a stop over in Inverness for Guinness and Haggis, a short drive the following morning concluded our mammoth 13 hour drive up to Scrabster harbour for our ferry crossing over to the island. Arriving on time and parking in the disabled queue provided us with priority embarkation and subsequent first in the queue for breakfast, the start of the fried breakfast marathon!!!

An hour and a half crossing minus half the group and all the dive kit, we arrived in Stromness where from onboard the ferry could be seen a distinctive red boat, our home for the week, the SMS Invincible. A quick introduction to the Skipper Ian and his Mate Fiona and our explanation to the distinct lack of people, we nabbed the best bunks and went for a wander into the bustling metropolis that surrounded.



A bit of a walk and a drive later we returned to be re united with our kit and the other members of the group whom had opted to do the drive up in one hit, only to arrive late at the port missing the ferry by only 5 mins.

Spoilt for choice of spots on the very spacious dive deck everybody rigged there kit, ponies were saddled up and Emma's Donkey was put in the stable (5L Stage cylinder + sling), ready for the following 6 days diving.

Sailing out the following morning the 15ft waves crashed over the deck tossing the boat like a small toy. Guided only by the boat's GPS and the sound of the lighthouse fog horn we headed for our first dive destination. Then it came! The alarm call! What sounded like a giant wearing a pair of lead boots walking down a metal stair case but was in fact Ian arriving onboard for a days work. We were aroused from our slumber, dreams and old sea dog tails of Scapa Flow were brushed aside and we were greeted by a glorious sunny day and sea that looked like a mill pond.



This to be the backdrop for the week with occasional days of rain added for good measure.

The standard day consisted of alarm call, allowing 2 hours ish to load some tea and toast in the belly and kit up ready for the first of two dives of the day. The relaxed nature of the boat allowed for the 'hour call to dive site' and arrival on time to be altered by ourselves to extent to suit the actual time it took us to kit up and get in the water. However not the way when dives were tide dependent! On

these occasions we adopted the lemming approach and dropped of the boat one after the other, all on time!

On conclusion of the first dive you were greeted by the jolly Fiona with the hot beverage of your choice. This followed up shortly afterwards with the optional breakfast that was put out when all divers were safely onboard. Gorging on a range of breakfast produce you would consume all you would need for the day, and would continue the on going debate whether fruit pudding should be eaten at breakfast with beans as served, or as a dessert with custard. For all those going later this year try it with a dobb of brown sauce and a pinch of salt, Beautiful!!!

A stop for a few hours now leading up to the second dive allowed people to disembark and have a wander about, sleep, or visit the museum if you stopped at Hope island. An interesting museum full of artefacts relevant to and obtained from what you are to dive throughout the week.

Final dive and back to Stromness. Most days were finished by three ish, leaving everybody feeling relaxed content and complete.

From the 10 dives obtained through the week we dived all the big 7 wrecks consisting of cruisers, battleships visiting the SMS Kronprinz Wilhelm twice due to the sheer size and the enjoyment had diving it. The remaining dives and equally as enjoyable were to include drifts on block ships and a torpedo boat.

On the deeper wrecks, due to the size of the boats, an excellent dive profile could be achieved. Diving the deeper sections first and rising up the super structure as the dive continued it was possible to finish up at and end the dive in depths of around 15m where you could ascend the shotline or deploy SMBs.

Most of us were diving on Nitrox ranging from EAN27 to EAN 32 allowing us sufficient depth and time limits to achieve enjoyable dives without venturing into deco and throughout the whole week the deepest max depth I achieved was 39m.

Considering this however we had a distinct reminder of how a DCI can get you even though you dive the most careful / safe dive. It was on conclusion of the second dive of the second day on the Dresden that one of the members of the group Dennis who for no fault or mistake got a hit. He was taken from the SMS Invincible by the Hope lifeboat to the Stromness chamber where he would undergo treatment for the rest of our stay and which was still ongoing on our departure back south.

Nights on board followed a standard procedure, showers, logbooks, drinks at the bar onboard, then as the evening progressed and stomachs rumbled plans to venture into town in search of food were hatched and executed. There are a range of pubs / hotels all serving nice food and deep fried cheese, which proved very popular within the group. A word of warning however if venturing out of Stromness in search of alternatives - you may not find one! Following

an hour and a half drive around the island one evening we failed to locate any pubs, only to learn the following day from Ian that pubs around those parts don't have standard signs indicating that it is a drinking establishment and that they are often hidden in the depths of the countryside.

All I can say in conclusion is what a great week! Thanks to the guys especially Phil and Sue for helping to organising it.

Final Thought...

This month's final thought is on cutting devices. The reason for this is because I was recently sent an email by a friend of mine who related the story of him getting caught in his SMB line when he launched it and how he had to cut the line before getting dragged up...something that might have happened to some of us in the past.

Ian was doing a wreck dive in the region of 30m when he had to launch his DSMB from the bottom to let the skipper know that he was ascending after completing just over 30 mins on the bottom. Out came the DSMB and it was duly inflated to about ¼ full before being set free on its path to the surface. Unfortunately a loop of the line got caught around his finger and locked off, with his weight pulling downwards and the buoyancy of the SMB going up (and getting stronger) he searched around and found his knife, removed it and cut the line. During the time it had taken him to get the knife free he had been pulled up approximately 10m. Ian had recently moved his knife from his right calf onto his waistband. It is very likely that if had not cut the

line he would have been dragged to the surface and would have probably suffered a hit.

There are many sorts of cutting devices available; small scalpel sized blades which fit on the inflator hose or Goodman torch handle, trauma shears to fit in a pocket or on a wasitband, large dive knives on the waist or leg. Whatever you have, you must be able to reach it and it must be able to cut what you want it to cut! Whilst this may sound a daft statement, you need to decide what you want to use your cutting device for and place it accordingly. In the UK the wrecks sometimes have monofilament fishing nets on them which normal dive knives will have trouble cutting. Monofilament is not limited to deeper wrecks as 2 months ago a dive operator from Plymouth I know went out to the James Egan Layne to clear some monofilament netting which had snagged and was creating problems to divers on the wreck. The best thing for cutting monofilament is surgical cutters (trauma shears). Although you can get these from LDS, the best bet is to go to a first aid shop and buy them at a third of the price. They are not marine grade steel and will only last a season but for £3 you can't go too wrong. A small knife might be all you need to cut some SMB line in case it gets tangled up. How many people had a snag the first time they launched an SMB? Having a cutting device handy might save you from getting dragged up – okay so it might cost you £20-30 if you lose the SMB but is that worth a trip to the pot for?

Another thing to think about is where you place the device. I would say that you need your 'first

defence' knife to be able to be reached by either hand and quickly. This could be on the inflator hose, waistband or on a torch handle. Having your only cutting device at your ankle might pose you problems if you need to reach it quickly.

Situations can develop quite quickly and the following happened to a diver I know. What would you have done in the same instance? Where are your cutting devices and how easy are they to reach...

X was doing a dive to 26m on the cannonball run off Portland, and saw a cannonball on the bottom a bit below him however it was just after he had launched his DSMB, so he let out some line to reach it, but still couldn't reach it as the tide was too taking him and the SMB away. However, as he bent down to try to reach for the cannonball, the line which he had paid out snagged on his split fins, and while he then bent down to get his knife from his ankle as he could see an issue developing, the movement further wrapped the line up, he then couldn't move and he was ascending now without a means to raise his arm to dump the suit so he pulled the neck seal to stop the ascent. Fortunately his buddy saw what was going on, came over and cut the line for him. If his knife had been on his upper body, the situation might not have developed to the extent it did...

As in a lot of circumstances in diving, there are no right answers but plenty of wrong ones, but only you can judge what is right and wrong for your own setup. Safe diving everyone.

Next month...
Situational awareness and Resource Management!!

Social Notices

Nothing notified.

Sales and Wants

If you want to advertise anything, on the website, email Steve Cain stevecain_diving@tiscali.co.uk.

Links and Contacts

If you need to raise an issue with the club committee, contact Lesley lesley.s@cotswoldwireless.co.uk and she will put your issues or questions to the committee.

Sea Horse Dive Club:
<http://www.seahorsediveclub.co.uk>

Website Issues:
stevecain_diving@tiscali.co.uk.

Newsletter Issues:
gareth.lock@imagesoflife.co.uk

White Horse Divers:
<http://www.againstthewind.org.uk/whitehorse/index.htm>

Website of the Month:
<http://www.bds.org/> a site dedicated to provide safety information for divers and skippers who are involved in dive operations. The BDSG is made up of representatives from the BSAC, RNLI and the Coastguard.