



Going Down

The 'Vanilla Flavour'

March 2009

Please note that the 'design/pretty version' will follow this weekend. This includes several funny snaps from the Xmas Do. Please note there are a few images in this version too.

Dear DSACIANS

Welcome to the March 2009 edition of Going Down.

I hope that you are off to good start to your diving season and look forward to receiving all of your stories. Please note that this is the plain text version (as requested by several members) of the newsletter, the 'souped up version' with photos et al to follow at the weekend.

In this edition Neil Hassell writes about his love for Camels (not the cigarette type), Sophie goes 'in depth' about the recent wreck appreciation course, and Lindsey gives us a safety and diving schedule update.

SJ

No Hiding Place – Chairwoman on on Patrol



**Or is it Inspector Gadget?
Egypt 2009**

News in brief

Shock resignation

Angie has resigned from the position of Social Secretary so the search is on for anyone else (or a posse of DSACIAN's) that wants to take over the role. Ange has kindly offered to organise the Xmas do this year, and Suzy Jarman is organising the summer BBQ. A huge thank you to Ange for all her hard work and enthusiasm over the years.

Branch of the Year Award

Neil Hassell is asking for help for this year's submission. Contact Neill on neilhassell@googlemail.com > or see him at the club.

Outboard & Boat Maintenance SDC

Sophie Parry has firmed up a date for this course. This SDC is open to anyone who has an interest in the practicalities of boat, trailer and outboard motor care. The course aims to be informative and practical to all students and should not be seen as 'too technical' or only for those adept at car mechanics etc. The aim of the course is to ensure you have enough general information on trailer, engine & boat care to deal with or even prevent the common issues and problems associated with club RIBS.

This SDC is being organised by eastern region as we have been updating the original BSAC Outboard & Boat Maintenance SDC material and bringing into the 21st century. This SDC whilst informative, is not replace DSAC's own RIB familiarisation course. However, students will receive a qualification record book certificate on completion of the course.

Course Details

Saturday 25 April 2009, start at 0900 hr and expect to complete by 1700 hr (timetable TBC nearer the date)

Location: Nash Mills Yard, Cycle Club Room
Bring: Packed Lunch, something to drink etc
Min entry Grade: Ocean Diver

The cost of this SDC is £56 per student.

Contact Sophie at: deepdown61@hotmail.com or see her at the club.

Nitrox course

Here is a reminder from Sophie Parry for those booked on the Nitrox Course. For those members requiring to do this course, the details are confirmed as follows:

Course details

Saturday 28th March, Cycle Club/ Compressor shed- Nash Mills, 0930hr - 1500 hr
Bring: empty cylinder in O2 service. This can be one of your diving cylinders as you will leave the course with a 32% fill. Packed Lunch and drink/flask etc. Membership number, qualification record folder and a colour passport size photograph.

Egypt

Vic is gathering a list of names for his 2010 extravaganza. Why miss the opportunity to see Vic in his leopard skin speedos. First come, first served – and the list is growing (too see Vic's speedos). See Vic at the club or email: vicmcdonald@hotmail.co.uk

Webmaster Graeme

Has been busy as usual updating the interweb site...updates are in progress on...the committee pages, working on the forum and the membership lists. Thanks Graeme.

Dive Fest 2009

This takes place on Friday 15 May to Sunday 17 May. It all takes place at Pentewan Sands Holiday Park, near Mevagissey in Cornwall, from 6pm on Friday 15 May to 5pm on Sunday 17 May 2009. Accommodation is booking up and there are a limited number of tickets, so make sure you get yours now – go to www.divefest.co.uk. Find out who is else is going to the event on the Dive Fest Facebook page. Please note that entry to the event will be strictly controlled and all visitors must have a ticket.

Here is a rundown, it sounds like a lot of fun ☺

Friday night

The event kicks off at 6pm on Friday night, with an acoustic duo providing musical entertainment in the main marquee. There'll be the opportunity to hook up with friends and prepare for the following day's diving. Divers wishing to register for Saturday's Splash-In competition can do so at the British Underwater Image Festival theatre on the first floor of the Clubhouse. Check in to your accommodation, check out the kit manufacturer stands and have a drink at the bar.

Saturday

Diving will be available throughout the day (see divefest.co.uk for more details), 15 buoyed sites offer a wide range of diving – something for everyone. Join in the underwater photography Splash-In sponsored by Cameras Underwater and Canon and keep an eye out for the gold pieces of eight in the underwater treasure hunt. There will be speakers – including Andy Torbet, Monty Halls and the Shark Trust – throughout both Saturday and Sunday in the main marquee. There's loads to do on the beach with a sand sculpture competition, beachcombing and plenty of games, as well as the chance to try out kit in the pool or introduce a non-diver to the sport with a try-dive in the pool. Saturday night is party night, with a hog roast included in your ticket price (vegetarian options available), and two bands performing on the main stage.

Sunday

More diving is on offer on the Sunday and with the holiday park offering a late checkout there is no need to rush home. Go and see the kit manufacturer stands and check out the films and photographs on display in the British Underwater Image Festival (BUIF) theatre. The BUIF prizegiving will take place on Sunday afternoon. Diving buoyancy challenges will take place off the beach and there will be more speakers and loads of prizes to be won.

Chris Davy is planning on attending this extravaganza so liaise with Chris re any lift sharing.

New BSAC Underwater Photography Course BSAC has released as new course in February 2009 for any budding paparazzi..Neil Hassell has further details (neilhassell@googlemail.com)

The Diver Training Group has been working to expand and enhance the range of courses you can teach. Our aim has been to devise courses that are fun and easily deliverable, broaden member's skills and respond to demand and, with Underwater Photography, we think we've done the job. The course has been developed with DIVE's photographer Charles Hood, resulting in a course that will improve and develop divers' underwater photography skills.

The DO's Bit From Lindsey!

As I'm writing this in mid February and planning my own pre-season warm-up dives, (having just finally got my regs back from being serviced at Croxley!), safety is very much on my mind.

I know some people dive regularly (at least once a month to keep their hand in) all year round - which has to be the best policy as long as you are prepared for the cold air and water temperatures! But most of us (myself included the last couple of years) take at least a couple of months off diving in the winter if we're not lucky enough to escape the country on a warm diving trip. Then care must be taken to check all your kit thoroughly and try it out in sheltered water – one of the quarries can be a good choice before investing time & money in a sea trip. (As you know, it's not uncommon for Vic to be sorting out buddy pairs at Gildenburgh!) The pool is paid for every week and as I often say, please let us know as a courtesy if you'd like to test your kit – we'd only have to say no if the pool was too full and that hasn't happened yet!! Please remember to work (back) up to your max depth / time gradually – expect a slight deterioration in your breathing rate, buoyancy control etc and maybe add a kilogram at first. You need to be ready to dive to 35 mt if that's what's planned for your first Sports Diver trip of the year! Sophie & I are preparing the buoyancy workshop which we hope will be well attended. Even instructors are having to demonstrate their buoyancy control, which I think, is a good thing!

In December I attended the **Diving Officers' Conference** and the 2008 **Incident Report** has been made readily accessible on our forum – I'd encourage everyone to have a browse and maybe "learn from other's mistakes". Cases of decompression illness have increased but happily ascent problems have decreased after a programme of education from BSAC. The 4 most common ascent-related problems were due to weighting, free-flows, poor buoyancy control and DSMBs. Assuming your reg is in serviceable condition, 3 of those 4 could be avoided with extra practice and/or training. Now the message is to take care when repeat diving to ensure sufficient off-gassing to avoid DCI.

Some of the incidents which I think illustrate possible issues relevant for DSAC divers include:
1) Injury / Illness Nov 07, (08/039) – a diver tried to lift his troubled buddy using his drysuit but lost his grip so he made a buoyant ascent while she dropped to the bottom unconscious. Happily she was rescued and did recover – *but this is why instructors insist you make a positive hold on your casualty when doing a CBL (on their BC, not anyone's drysuit!)* 2) Ascents Jul 08 (08/210) – a female diver was recompressed as a precaution after a dive with so many things going wrong for her that it's not surprising she fell into the incident pit – motto – *know when to abort – it's better to be on the boat wishing you were underwater than vice versa!* Also July, 3) (08/212) – divers accumulating 20 min of decompression (and running out of gas) without having planned any – or even a dive time. It seems so obvious - *Plan the dive, dive the plan!*
And finally, 4) July again – overseas ascents – (08/165) – an overweighted diver running out of gas caught in a downcurrent saves himself by (eventually) ditching his weightbelt. *So that's why you seem to have to ditch your weights so often in training! If you trained a while ago, it's a useful skill to practice.*
It'd be great if everyone reading this thinks I'm preaching to the converted as you've already taken all this and more into consideration – but if even only one person is nudged into safer behaviour by reading this then it's worthwhile writing it!
Here's to a fun and SAFE diving season 2009,
Lindsey.

DSAC Sea Diving Schedule 2009

Date	Launch site / town + boat	Diving description	Club backed trip Y or N / Approx cost	Organiser
18 - 25 Feb	Marsa Alam, Egypt	Clear warm blue water!	Y	Vic McDonald
21-22 March	Portland, (Scimitar?)	45 m max	N	Sarah Jones – <i>not yet booked</i>
25-26 April	Portland	Training trip suitable beginners	Club RHIB	Colin Poole / Andy Lowde
26-27 April	Eastbourne, Our W	35 m max	N	Karl Dancer – <i>not yet booked</i>
2-3 May	Portsmouth, Wight Diver	45 m (suit DL / ERD)	N	Dan Egleton
2 May	Swanage	Aeolian Sky + drift	Club RHIB	Colin Poole
15-17 May	Mevagissey, Cornwall	"Dive Fest" family event	£20-35 each plus diving + accomm	N/A - Public event
16-17 May	Weymouth, (Skin Deep?)	55 m max	N	Sarah Jones – <i>not yet booked</i>
16-17 May	Kimmeridge	SD or above	Club RHIB	Mark Murphy
23 - 30 May	Tobermory / Sound of Mull	SD min	Club RHIB, £600	Colin Poole
28 May – 12 June	Komodo		N/A - holiday	Tony Reavill
6-7 June	Eastbourne, Our W	SD, wrecks	N (£90) <i>FULL</i>	Dan Egleton
13-14 June	Hayling Island TBC	SD, wrecks TBC	Club RHIB	Dan Egleton
20 June	West Bay	SD min – HMS Bittern + Baygitano / drift	Club RHIB	Colin Poole
27–4 July	Norway	Liveaboard wreck diving	N/A (holiday)	Sophie Parry
27-28 June	Brighton, Seabreeze 3	TBC	N	Rob Evans
27–29 June	Farne Isles, Sovereign Diving (Seahouses)	SD or above	Y	Tony Reavill
30 June - ?	St Abbs	SD or above	?	Tony Reavill
4-5 July	Hayling Island	SD or above		
4-5 July	Huntress, West Bay	SD or above	Y (£90)	Clive Scales
18 July	Rye – The Gurka	SD min – The Gurka	Club RHIB	Colin Poole
31 July – 3 Aug	Plymouth, Furious	SD or above	Y	Barrie Pluck
8-15 Aug	Kerry, Ireland	OD +, scenic,	Y	Lindsey Doyle

		fly + S/C		
15 Aug	Rye	SD min – The Argonaut	Club RHIB	Colin Poole
5 – 12 Sep	Malta, Maltaqua	SD +	N/A (holiday) approx £520	Suzy Jarman
12-13 Sep	Portland	Focus on subs, exp. SD +	Club RHIB	<i>TBC</i>
19-20 Sep	Eastbourne, Our W	50 m	N (£90)	Dan Egleton
26 Sep	Hayling Island	SD min – The Cuba + drift	Club RHIB	Colin Poole
18 Oct – 1 Nov	Galapagos Islands	Wow! Sealions & penguins ?	N/A (holiday)	Tony Reavill

British Sub-Aqua Club's Wreck Appreciation Course **Sophie Parry**

During September & October 2008, Dacorum Sub-Aqua Club based in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire ran one of the British Sub-Aqua Club's newest skill development courses for its members.

The wreck appreciation SDC is based on training material & techniques used by the British Sub-Aqua Club and the Nautical Archaeological Society.

This course is relevant, as not only does it teach students how to dive safely on and inside wreck. It also makes the students aware of marine life found on wreck & the laws surrounding the protection of wreck. This is particularly relevant given that there has been a growing concern by the authorities over the last few years regarding the activities of some recreational divers who make it their business to take items from wreck. This has led to the development of a raft of new legislation aimed at protecting wreck, and in particular, the Heritage Protection Bill which is currently being drafted. The ultimate aim of the course is to engage recreational divers as custodians of wreck and to involve them in the monitoring and documentation of wreck sites, rather banning them from wreck. It's therefore logical to assume that the NAS 'adopt a wreck' scheme should grow in popularity as this SDC becomes popular with divers.

The majority of the students on the course were Ocean and Sports Divers and being relatively new to diving will therefore be receiving the most up to date training on the do's & don'ts of wreck diving.

It should also be noted that a few more experienced and highly qualified divers also elected to do the course. The skill development course comprises of 6 Theory lessons, 3 Dry practical lessons, 2 dives and a dry workshop to conclude where students use their collective survey data to create a scale drawing of the selected survey site.

The theory lessons covered:

Wreck Location, Ship Construction & Wreck Lay-Out, Wrecks & Marine Life, Wreck Diving Equipment & Techniques, Wreck Laws & Simple Site Recording and finally a course overview.

The Dry Practical Sessions Covered:

Use of Distance Lines & DSMB, Site Recording and Diving kit Configuration.

The Open Water Lessons Covered:

Diving Techniques & Wreck Orientation followed by A Wreck Study and Simple Site Recording. Each buddy pair was assigned a section of the wreck to survey. To conclude the course, all the students turned their survey data into a scale drawing of the wreck.

There is considerable course content in this SDC. The club carried out the theory lessons at a rate of 2 lessons a week over 3 weeks. A further two sessions over two weeks were then used to do the dry practical lessons.

The club had planned to do the wreck dives from Castletown on the Isle of Portland, but unfortunately the hard boat skipper had to call off the diving at short notice due to bad weather. It was decided that the course would be completed at an in-land dive site so we all headed for Stoney Cove and the Stanegarh.

The Stanegarh is a good wreck for training purposes but the chances of being able to instruct without having to take into account (and in my case be harassed by) other divers also diving the Stanegarh at weekends is a worthy consideration. However, we completed the dives with all essential criteria being taught to the students.

The completed survey

The SDC was managed by Neil Hassell of Dacorum Sub-Aqua Club. Neil says he was inspired to run the course after he attended the NAS introduction course.

The instructor team working with Neil was: Kris Pedder, Jacqui Murphy, Lindsey Doyle and Sophie Parry.

Wreck corner – Empress of India

SJ

Ever tried this one from West Bay??

I have dived it a few times, even in good vis. It's quite a large wreck and fairly deep so you need to think about what gas you want to use.

She was massive, and still is. She was a big battleship with big guns. Some of her armour plate was more than 17in thick. But it was a good job she never went to war. She was built in Pembroke Dock as one of the Royal Sovereign class of battleships and named Renown. However, in 1890 during her building she was renamed Empress of India and was completed under that name in May, 1891.

The 14,150 ton Empress was 380ft long with a beam of 75ft, and was armed with four 13.5in, ten 6in and 16 six-pounder guns, and seven torpedo tubes. Twin screws driven by triple-expansion engines and eight boilers drove her along, but even early on there was some discontent with her performance.

That discontent was undoubtedly the main reason why she was selected as the target for gunnery exercises in early November, 1913. She was also reckoned to be pretty near obsolete. So she was towed into Devon's Lyme Bay for gunnery tests. Before this, her propellers had been removed and other more portable fittings stripped off her.

The shoot was expected to take some hours, as the Empress of India was protected by a belt of mild-steel armour plate which varied in thickness from 5 to 17in. Fired at with her own shells, by guns of similar calibre mounted in Dreadnoughts, she didn't last long.

A shell from one of the smaller ships set her on fire. Then one of the first salvos from a Dreadnought smashed a hole below her waterline. Her armour plate did not extend down there, and she promptly turned over and sank. Everyone seems to have been quite surprised by this swift end to their gunnery.

She landed upside-down on the seabed, and some salvage was soon carried out by a Jersey company which owns the rights. The big hole in her side was made not by the shell that sank her, but by salvage divers blowing out a condenser.

POSITION: 50 29.72N; 02 57.88W. DEPTH: 44m.

SUNK: 4 November, 1913, by shells fired during Royal Navy gunnery tests, holed below waterline, capsized.

DIVING: Sits upside-down. Propellers removed earlier. Hole in port side due to salvage of a condenser. Depth to keel 30m. Two openings amidships where contents of mess have spilled out. Portholes 'like bay windows'. Do not enter by going in through 3m scour underneath, as most of wreck tight to mud seabed.

Critter corner –let's all do the Conger SJ

I thought it would be nice to have a bit on our slimy friends given most of us will have dived or surprised a few of them!!

Conger conger is found predominantly on the south and western coasts of England, Wales and Scotland and all around the Irish coast. There are a few records on eastern coasts of England and Scotland though the conger is less numerous in these areas.

During the day *Conger conger* are found in holes or crevices on rocky or sandy bottoms and in wrecks and other artificial environments. Conger eels become more active at night when they leave their resting places to hunt. Many Congers are found down to depths of 500 m but descend to as deep as 4000 m to spawn.

Conger conger is a long, powerful fish with scaleless, smooth skin. They are usually grey-blue or grey-black in colour with a white or pale golden coloured belly. In deeper water they have a light brown back with grey sides and belly. The dorsal, tail and anal fins are fused making a complete fringe around the body. The dorsal fin starts just behind the tip of the pectoral fin and the anal fin terminates midway along the underside of the fish. Conger eels can grow to 2.75 m in length but are more commonly seen at around 2 m long.

- Dorsal, tail and anal fins fused forming a complete fringe with a pointed tail.
- The pectoral fins are pointed with the dorsal fin beginning just behind the pectoral tip.
- The eyes are elliptical and the upper jaw is longer than the lower.
- Nostril openings face forward on the snout.
- Grey-blue or grey-brown in colour with black margin around dorsal and anal fins.

**Dahab – winter sun, shore diving and camels galore.
Neil Hassell**

I love Egypt. The people, the diving, the convenience. But usually unless it's made of metal and can be reached by falling off a luxury liveaboard I am not that interested. Scenic diving, UK or abroad, has always played second fiddle with me.

So taking a holiday in Dahab, where boats are only allowed to travel south, there are no wrecks, only fringing reefs and the resort is famous more for its Bedouin chic, windsurfing and pot smoking freedivers, may seem strange. But this was not a diving holiday; it was a holiday with my non-diving girlfriend, during which I planned to squeeze in a couple of days diving if I could.

Dahab is lovely. Despite the fact that since this little Bedouin village was first visited by divers in the 1970s and has grown to host a Hilton and numerous international hotels it has not been ruined like Sharm. The old town of Ashallah still retains its charm, its bazaar and its character. Unlike Sharm you are truly surrounded by the mountains, the camels, the desert and the sea. The place is quiet, calm and does feel like a 'get away from it all' resort.



But you are not

interested in that. You want to know what the diving was like and so did I! Am I converted to scenic diving? Well, if any place is going to do it then Dahab is it. The Canyon, El Bells and Blue Hole are as exciting and awesome as they sound and this time of year not busy (which I have heard they can be in the summer).

But what struck me most was the quality of the coral here. Truly spectacular, and in incredible condition by Red Sea standards thanks to HEPCA and lots of locals organising litter picking and diver education. One dive site, Shoab Said, is known locally as 'Happy Coral' and never has a site been better named. The dive is a slow (and very careful buoyancy) wriggle through canyons, arches, blocks and caverns of coral all in 10m, bathed in sunlight.

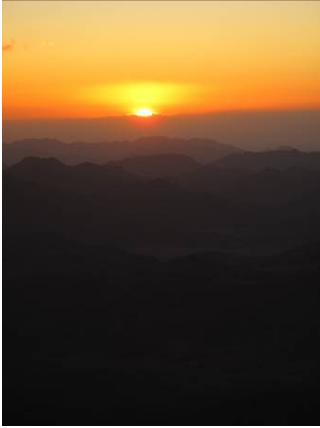


Whether it will stay this good as it becomes more popular waits to be seen. Until recently it was a bit of an in house secret within Sinai Divers but they tell me that it is now appearing in guide books – which could spell its impending doom if these books make it into Italian or Russian!

Are Sinai Divers good? Yes, not bad. No different to the other centres I have used. Quite chilled, nice ambience and friendly mainly Egyptian staff which I like. Not all of their customers maintain quite the same levels of professionalism though. I have never seen so

many divers on AS at once as I did during the checkout dive. My suggestion – take the boat trips – they tend to attract those who know what a BC does or how to read an SPG.

At 21⁰ the water in winter is just on the cold side for me, and if I was diving for a week I would have taken my dry suit. Most of the guides were snugly wrapped up in theirs and would be until April. But the air temperature is good and you soon warm up on the surface.



Since I was not diving every day I took the opportunity to also climb Mount Sinai and see where (allegedly) Moses took down the 10 commandments and the burning bush, which motivated him to go there. It's a great experience, physical, but not hellish. But my God; very cold. You climb at night to make the sunrise and at the top it was -10⁰ with wind-chill. Worth it though. And I can now say I have actually used a BSAC 88 transfer table in anger as the mountain is a potentially fizzy 2285m ASL.

Others took trips across to Saudi and Jordan with Petra being popular and I think if I went back for a week or more I would also be tempted. It's an area of such beauty and history that actually at times the diving is not the most spectacular or significant thing

around. Finally I have also discovered how to use my camera. Apparently there is this thing called white balance and the whole world is in fact not blue and hazy!

A successful trip? – very much. A good winter sun destination? – again yes. Good diving? – some of the best scenery I have dived but not the place

