

Last Orders At The Puff Inn



St Kilda has 'gone dry'

DIVERS VISITING the most remote diving location in the UK will no doubt be disappointed to hear they can no longer pop ashore for a refreshing drink. The Puff Inn, on St Kilda has recently been closed to all non-resident staff on the island, meaning that the large numbers

of divers visiting each year will now be unable to visit the pub.

St Kilda is owned and operated by the National Trust for Scotland. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has also had a presence on the island for 50 years, leasing areas of land from the National Trust. Today, the site is operated and managed by defence and security company QinetiQ on behalf of the MoD.

SCOTTISH DIVER spoke with QinetiQ, who confirmed the pub is now closed to the public as it

is actually a canteen facility within an MoD site. Such sites are only open to MoD staff or visitors attending on related business and the facility is therefore not open to the general public. The recent change brings the facility in line with all other MoD sites.

It has been reported in the media and diving press that the closure of the facility to divers is related to increased terror threats, including the recent London bombings. However, this is denied by MoD.

QinetiQ and the MoD have confirmed that the medical reception centre will continue to be available to visitors, as well as toilet facilities which are operated by the National Trust for Scotland.

HSE Clamp Down On Rogue Divers

THE USE OF unsafe electric equipment in commercial fishing operations has prompted the Health & Safety Executive to issue a warning to divers about the risks involved in such practices.

It was an investigation into illegal razor fish diving that brought to light the dangerous methods that some divers are willing to use in order to earn an amount that is rumoured to be around £1,500 per day's 'work'.

Electrified cables are dropped into the water and then dragged across the seabed, stunning razor fish as they go; a diver follows the path of the cable, collecting the stunned fish as they go; it is obvious that in doing so they are putting themselves in considerable danger of electrocution.

An somewhat amusing illustrates the way in which the authorities are dealing with this problem:

"A suspect vessel with a diver behind it was reported in the water and a police launch carrying a diver and two HSE

Inspectors was dispatched to make a high-speed approach. As the launch came within sight of the fishing vessel a crew member was seen to move to the stern and throw something overboard.

"The vessel was approached, hailed and warned that HSE inspectors would be boarding. The location of the diver in the water was identified and the police deployed a heavy shot-line to mark the location of the dropped object, as two HSE Inspectors boarded and started their investigation.

"The crew was asked if they were using electrical cables for fishing and after being informed that a USU was available and prepared to dive, he admitted to dumping the electrical cables and using them for catching razor fish. After isolating the generator used to charge the cables, a USU diver searched the seabed and found that the shot-line had landed on top of the electric cables, which were then recovered.

"Meanwhile, onboard the vessel, HSE discovered the illegal diver was also the skipper

which meant that if he had been injured there was no means of rescuing him from the water. Furthermore, this would have prevented the boat from being operated since the sole remaining crewman could not sail it single-handed.

"As a result of the operation, a Prohibition Notice was served on the vessel operator, which immediately brought to a halt the dangerous diving practices and effectively prevented the boat from being used in a similar manner until the Notice had been satisfactorily complied with."

Commenting on the operation, Frank Murray, HSE Principal Inspector of Diving, said:

"The close cooperation for this operation between HSE and the other responsible agencies is seen as a great success and heralds future similar operations. We are determined that dangerous commercial diving operations will be vigorously tracked down and stopped."

Climate Change Spells Disaster For Scottish Seas

A NEW REPORT by World Wildlife Fund (WWF), published in August 2005, reveals the disastrous impacts that climate change will have on the seas around Scotland, with disruptions across the marine food chain from plankton to fish and dolphins.

The report, 'Vulnerability Assessment of the North-East Atlantic Shelf Marine Ecoregion to Climate Change' says that plankton in the North Sea, a major food source of commercial fisheries and the foundation of the whole marine environment, have already changed dramatically. This will have direct impacts on fish including cod, herring and salmon, in addition to their current pressures from unsustainable fisheries.

An increasing rise in sea surface temperature will be a major factor in further disrupting the breeding, feeding and growing cycles of fish, and in turn sea birds.

Dolphins and porpoises are also likely to be affected, with the combination of chemical pollution and reduced food supply threatening their breeding success.

Dr Richard Dixon, Director of WWF Scotland said:

"Scotland's seas are vital for our economy and the health of our environment. This report shows that major changes are coming, with the oceans becoming more acidic, plankton shifting and storm-driven floods more frequent.

"Initially sunny days at the beach and a tuna fish quota might sound attractive, but the reality will be that life and living will become a lot harder everywhere around Scottish coasts."

The acidity of the sea has already increased significantly and by the end of the century this will mean that some species will be unable to effectively utilise nutrients from the water. Shellfish and corals, as well as



The World Wildlife Fund's warns of the impact of climate change on Scottish seas

the breeding success of fish, will all be seriously affected.

Dr Dixon continued: "The climate is already changing and will change more, but action today to reduce carbon dioxide emissions is the only way to make sure that future change does not tip us all over into climate chaos.

"While everyone can do their bit, Scottish Ministers must finally get serious about climate change and take action across the economy to reduce emissions."

A full copy of the report can be found on:

www.wwf.org.uk/news/scotland/

NAS Annual Conference

DETAILS HAVE been announced of the Nautical Archaeological Society's Annual Conference to be held on November 12 at the Historic Docks, Portsmouth. Topics at the one day conference include: Archaeology of the Red Sea, a wreck from the Spanish Armada and the excavation of an Elizabethan merchantman in the Thames.

The event will also incorporate the 3rd Annual Adopt-A-Wreck Award, which is to be presented by Time Team's Phil Harding, and the inaugural NAS Photographic Competition. Registration costs are £20 for NAS member and £25 for non-members.

In addition, there is evening entertainment with a private viewing of the remains of the *Mary Rose* in the Ship Hall and a film of her recovery. This is followed by a conference dinner in the form of a lavish Tudor Banquet held within the Mary Rose Museum. The cost of the evening is £50 for NAS member and £60 for non-members.

For more information on the conference, accommodation and a full list of speakers see:

www.nasportsmouth.org.uk

or telephone Sarah on: 023 9281 8419.

Filipino Volunteers Needed

TIRED OF your nine to five job and Scotland's dreary skies? Well, read on! Coral Cay Conservation (CCC), the international coral reef conservation organisation, is urgently appealing for volunteers to help perform crucial baseline wildlife assessments in the Philippines.

Human impacts such as over-fishing and the use of destructive techniques like coral dynamiting, nutrient enrichment of coastal areas and sedimentation, threaten the health and diversity of reef ecosystems in

the Philippines.

CCC has worked in partnership with the Philippine Reef and Rainforest Conservation Foundation Inc (PRRCFI) and local communities to survey and safeguard reef and rainforest areas of the Philippines since 1995.

The Southern Leyte Coral Reef Conservation Project needs volunteers to survey Sogod Bay, an important feeding ground for a range of marine megafaunal species including pilot whale and



volunteering can be fun

whale shark.

If this sounds like the stuff your dreams are made of then don't delay - check out:

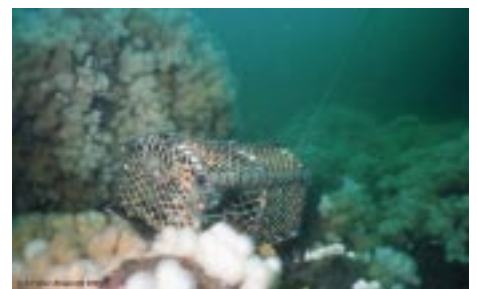
www.coralcay.org.

Follow the Creel Pot Code!

THERE HAVE been rumours this summer of creel pots laid within the St. Abbs Voluntary Marine Reserve (VMR), being cut open by divers. Whether these rumours are substantiated or not, divers are reminded that it is both

illegal and dangerous to tamper with fishing gear or creel pots. The St. Abbs Voluntary Marine Reserve Code of Practice clearly states this, and full details of the Code of Practice can be found on the VMR web site at www.marine-reserve.co.uk

The VMR Code of Practice aims to balance the needs of conservation, recreation and a sustainable fishery, and relies on ALL users to stick to it to help conserve the marine life for future generations to enjoy.



It is illegal to tamper with creel pots