

Birmingham Banter



Closed circuit rebreathers in use in the BSAC try a rebreather pool

The colourful frontage of the co-ordinated Caribbean stands

words & pictures Ken Farrow

THIS YEAR'S Birmingham Dive show at the National Conference & Exhibition Centre on October 13/14 provided the usual mix of stands and exhibitors with some interesting changes. Equipment could be purchased from retailers such as Divers Warehouse, Collins and Chambers and the like while you could try on or be measured up for suits by Otter Watersports and Northern Diver. Holidays and expeditions could be arranged for almost anywhere in the world. Training agencies included PADI (with an entire 'village'), the SAA (all in natty matching red outfits) and the BSAC (who after years of apparent indecision about whether there colour was blue or green now appear to have also decided to include purple).

The most intriguing of the stands was the co-ordinated group of Caribbean Islands who had a row of mock house fronts as stands. Brightly coloured, the row was reminiscent of Tobermory on Mull but with architecture akin to that from places like St Lucia.

This year there were two separate try a dive pools - a conventional dive pool with

aqua-lungs (open circuit) and a second laid on by BSAC. The BSAC pool was entirely devoted to having a try a dive on a rebreather with both semi-closed models from Draeger, and fully closed circuit electron Inspirations from AP Valves. Sadly the stand was not fully staffed by experts on the subject but it is early days and many open circuit divers still have a lot to learn about rebreathers. However it was gratifying to see BSAC recovering and once more looking dynamic.

As ever the best part of attending a Dive Show is meeting old friends and former diving buddies. I was delighted to meet Mike Dunning over from the Isle of Man where I first met him well over twenty years ago and Mike Shearman, ex-Aberdeen, who is now resident on the south coast. There were various folk down from Scotland including Invernessian John Leigh of JackSAC, but sadly I didn't bump into the ScotSAC gang. Another Mike I spoke to was Mike Todd a former BSAC Chairman and once again organiser of the Diving Officers Conference.

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