



A Sound Weekend

The Diving Belle

I FIRST got in touch with Chris and Pam when I found their contact details on a diving website in 1996. We booked their boat MV *Lucapa* and had some really successful weekends diving in the Sound of Mull but it wasn't a very fast boat and lacked space and good shelter when the weather broke. MUSAC then had a year or two with no Mull trips but we kept in touch and this year I decided to organise a three day trip based on their new bigger boat, the *Diving Belle* (as advertised in the **Scottish DIVER**).

Belle is a big improvement on the *Lucapa* but retains the best part - the crew! Our group Rab Malcolm, Colin Brown, Gary Calvet, George Steedman, Sahra Edmond, Gerald Jamieson, Netty Moyes, Penny (from Borders club), Adrian Carr and myself. We spent Friday night in Oban Divers' big 14-berth bunkhouse (Mike Tye's place) Like any good dive trip there was plenty of snoring that evening but I slept through it all and we loaded our gear on the *Diving Belle* at 9 am on Saturday.

The weather was kind to us for a dive at Seill Island and later the *Shuna* wreck. Seill Island was fairly unspectacular for George and myself but we managed to collect a huge bag of scallops that gave George serious weight problems when surfacing. Chris demonstrated how to clean scallops properly and later Pam laid out a really tasty buffet lunch with fresh scallops. *Shuna* was as good as I have seen it - covered with soft coral and sea squirts, and with lots of big fish resting inside the structure of the wreck. By evening *Belle* was docked in a sunny Tobermory harbour and the group checked into the Harbour Guesthouse while Chris took two of us away on his rib for an extra dive to the rear of Calve island. Tobermory is a lively place to spend the evening and the guesthouse was clean and friendly.

By Sunday the wind had picked up and we were unable to sail out to the *Tapti* wreck at Coll. Instead we did a fantastic deep wall dive on Calve Island. After a relaxing walk to see some waterfalls *Belle* cruised down to the *Rondo* wreck for our second dive. An 8.00 am sail on Monday allowed us to dive the *Hispania* on slack at 8.30. It is one of the most colourful wreck dives and not only did we have good viz, because it was a Monday we had the whole wreck to ourselves. The last time I counted six other boats! I was interested to see how the wreck looked now after hearing about her increasing tilt, and predictions by some that she will soon fall over. *Hispania* is still my favourite playground as the currents that make dive timing so important also support much life and sweep the wreck clean. You never know what to expect. This time I had to back up a corridor to make way for a huge free-swimming conger eel! Our holiday ended on the *Thesis* which we visited on our way back to Oban. Again an interesting wreck to swim round for a photographer as she was teeming with fish life.

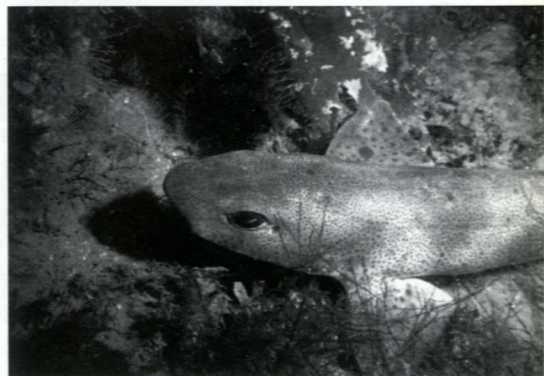
It was as an enjoyable and relaxing dive holiday by any standards and three days cost only £120! Three days enjoying the beautiful scenery of the Sound on *Belle* and diving at £25 per day, two day B&B in Tobermory at £20 per night and one night in Oban Divers at £6.

We have booked the *Diving Belle* for the same time next year, aiming for the *Tapti* this time. So if you are a ScotSAC qualified diver and would like to join us on this or any of our other trips also if you are looking for divers to make up numbers on trips, e-mail me at SandyMcPherson02@cs.com or write to me at 33 Stormont Road, Scone, Perthshire, PH2 6PJ.

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Gerald Jamieson and Colin Brown on the Rondo



Dog Fish on Calvi Island

words & pictures Sandy McPherson