

# Diving the Depths

A report on the new ScotSAC Endorsed Deep Diving Course

**Andy Parks had been waiting for ScotSAC's Deep Diving endorsement for most of his diving life. Being a doughty North-Eastie, he decided to build one himself. Here's how the prototype for the DD endorsement progressed from the drawing board to reality ...**

A LONG time ago in a sea that now seems far far away two divers dived a wreck. It was October 1999 and the wreck was the stern of the *Fram* in the Moray Firth which lies at 50m. Conditions were pretty good and the dive went like clockwork – it was one of those (sometimes rare) days when all of the planning and preparation came together and the result was a cracking dive. We were spot on time at every stage of the dive, were within 5% of our estimated gas consumption and retired to the pub afterwards feeling pretty smug about the whole thing.

If you want to dive a boat shaped wreck in the North East you need to go deeper, everything shallow is minced by the sea over the winter and absolutely flat. Because at heart I am a bit of a control freak and coward, I like to plan these dives in detail. And it is always a good feeling when you come back alive! We were starting to get into a habit for deeper dives that seemed to work, not rocket science and certainly not anything others have not done before.

I was asked if I would put together a couple of lectures for

my branch on dive planning and took up the challenge. At this point things quickly got out of hand. George McBurns our Regional Coach and a couple of more senior divers in Grampian Branch started talking about adding some more things to the 'couple of lectures' to try to create the mythical ScotSAC Deep Diving Endorsement. This has sat quietly in my log book since I started diving 16 years ago and when asked about, it was either 'being worked on' or talked about in hushed tones which suggested it should not be discussed.

Grampian Branch is fairly self-sufficient and, like many branches, has a few pretty useful divers so we set about writing the endorsement. We did not really ask ScotSAC, or even tell them officially that we were doing it; a show of supreme self-confidence or a reluctance to stick heads above the parapet until we knew we could deliver – probably the latter. It was planned as a deep air course because many divers operated in 30-50m on air even though there were and are better gasses if you have the qualifications and experience to use them.

Anyway, by the middle of the next season we had most of the initial work done and thought we should let HQ know what we had been up to. A few meetings with Gus Furrrie led to a final shape and a bit of tidying up before I introduced it at the BDO Conference in Oban, confidently predicting that the first course would be run the following season. Aye right!

NDOs changed and we did manage to get a final version of the course and assessments completed and sent them to HQ for implantation. Three years later in 2005 (don't ask) the course resurfaced and we met at HQ to organise instructors. Within three months of that, six intrepid deep dive candidates were put through their paces in Aberdeen.

Nothing ever goes as smoothly as you plan and when our original venue at Ullapool fell through we switched it to Aberdeen where we had access to a superb lecture facility. The Saturday would be a day of intensive lectures covering deco – dive planning – and the practical, physical and mental considerations in deep diving on air. This was delivered by Graeme Forsyth, Alejandro Gallego and myself - the candidates must be congratulated for their patience as we ran overtime quite a bit, however we did identify quite a few areas to trim it back a bit.

Assessment on the Saturday was through completion of three workshops which were in turn used to plan the diving for the following day. Saturday night was spent at an Indian restaurant trying to put into practice the theories about not drinking too much before deep diving.

The plan on Sunday was to dive a wreck in Cullen Bay at 30m. The weather forecast midweek had not been too clever but the weather gods were kind to us and Sunday was fine for most of the day. We needed boats of which Grampian Branch has two RIBs, one was promised to a Seasearch



*Saturday's lecture sessions were a tough gig*

trip that weekend but unfortunately we had blown the engine on the other one the previous Sunday.

No problem, we would borrow one from another Aberdeen club, or so we thought - there are about seven club RIBs up here and five of them were out of the water being fixed - bollocks! We pulled rank on the Seasearch and left them shore diving on the Sunday – sorry guys.

Portsoy Harbour saw five candidates and three instructors arrive on time - amazing! Illness prevented one candidate diving but we will finish his assessment soon when conditions allow. Loads of shiny

dive kit appeared and lots of ropes and buoys were loaded into the RIB. In flat calm sea we motored out to find the wreck which is a pretty small sonar target.

Shot line in and a deco trapeze rigged, not really necessary but good for show, and in we went to 29m - but we had missed the wreck. Not to worry though as the candidates carried out a flawless (but unsuccessful) sweep search gathering scallops

as we went, no need to waste the dive. Back on the shot, bang on time and up onto the trapeze to deco. A definite pass.

We re-laid the shot and hit the wreck and the others followed with two good dives on a very pretty little wreck. Unfortunately the wind and current picked up a bit and the first wave definitely got the best conditions. The



*I hope Calum Duncan doesn't read that bit about commandeering the RIB (editor)*



*The scenario sessions were well prepared*

Flash Card task system seemed to work well and the candidates were all on their best behaviour, passing without too much difficulty.

I hope that the format of the course is such that it is not too stressful. There is no big exam and there is an assumption that if you are looking to dive deep you already have pretty good basic skills.

The dive assessment is an observed but normal deep dive with the instructor creating a couple of problems to be safely overcome. The skills to do this are already taught by ScotSAC so again are not new.

We will be working on the timing of the Saturday sessions to shorten them a little and will streamline the workshops a little

more. The initial feedback from those involved was very positive and it appears to be a useful and good course.

Is it worth doing? I would have to say yes given my involvement in it. However,

if you do not want to dive deep it is probably not for you. Some people have said, 'I only dive deep occasionally so I don't need it' – I am not so sure about that one; if you only do these dives occasionally it should be even more important that they are meticulously planned and

executed.

Congratulations to Colin McWhirr, Donald MacFarlane, Andy McGeoch, and Emily Gamble of Grampian Branch and Craig Pattison of Strathclyde University Branch who all passed; Les Noble of Grampian Branch should pass when he is fit enough to complete the open water assessment.

## Ernie On The Move



WELL KNOWN ScotSAC member Ernie Pringle is leaving Scotland for New Zealand. Ernie has been an active member and instructor with Bo'ness Sub-Aqua Club for many years, including holding the role of Diving Officer for some time.

Ernie has now handed over the reins of Diving Officer to Sam Paske and Sam's first duty was to organise a large send-off for Ernie. A good night was had by all. Everyone at ScotSAC wishes Ernie all the best for his future in New Zealand.

## Items For Sale

- Otter membrane suit 5' 7" - 5' 8" and boot size 8. New zip and shoulder dump - £220
- Weasel under suit - £90
- Otter under suit - £30
- UKD4R torch battery hardly used - £50
- Tx40 Regulator and contents gauge. Has just been tested and not used - £150
- Suunto sk7 compass - £25
- Buddy commando td stabby jacket with hose - £225

Anyone interested contact: Aquabill@onetel.com

## Congratulations

### MASTER DIVER CONGRATS

Congratulations to Sue & Jim MacDougall of Carlisle Branch for attaining their Master Diver qualification.

Congratulations and well done to Graeme McKay and Ronnie Scrymgeour on completing their Master Diver award .

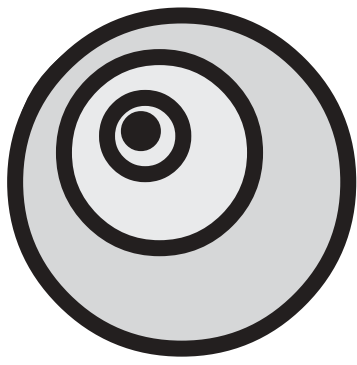
### SPORT DIVER CONGRATS

Congratulations to Neil McGrath (Bellshill SAC) on obtaining his Sport Diver Qualifica-

tion. Details supplied by Amber Williamson (Secretary).

Congratulations to Declan Tobin for achieving his Sports Diver qualification on August 31. Details from Alex Gallego (Grampian Branch BDO).

Congratulations to Joanne Graham, Martin Gower and Gillian Scrymgeour for obtaining their Sport Diver qualification. All three are from Bo'ness branch.



## National Diving Officer Kevin Webb provides an update on the activities of the National Diving Council

HELLO FELLOW divers - it has been a while since you last heard from me. Well things move on and so do people.

There have been a few changes in personnel:

- Instead of a National Coach, we now have two Senior Regional Coaches - Murray Mcallum and Tony Carter have agreed to take these roles on. It was felt that ScotSAC would be best served by two very experienced Senior Regional Coaches as we have a large area to cover.
- Joe Campbell has agreed to take on the ScotSAC training pool and all that will entail.
- Frank Conner has agreed/ volunteered to be the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Officer. This is a GC position but also affects NDC.
- Andy Parks, who put a lot of time and energy into the Deep Diving Course before it came on line, is now the Deep Diving Director of the course.

My thanks to you all for taking on these extra roles. My thanks also go to Grant Adams for his help and input as assistant NDO. Grant has had to step down because of work and home commitments, and Drew Stephenson has agreed to take the role on. Again my thanks to you both.

Over the last few months there have been some rumblings about the short fall in courses this year. Well the fact of the matter is that this seems to happen every other year. One year the courses are blitzed, the next not enough candidates are available to be able to run viable courses.

There are still some courses being run, and some are under revue such as the BI, RI, Boat handling and the new Nitrox and Advance Nitrox courses. However the fact still remains that at this time there are not enough names in the course book to enable us to run most of the courses.

There will be a first class weekend run early in the New Year. On this course Drew Stephenson (who is the director of the first class course), tells me they can only accommodate six candidates at a time because of the nature of the course.

There will be BI and O2 Heart Start courses running soon. Can I also remind you all that unless you contact Alicia or Ann

Marie in HQ and get your names down in the course book we cannot run the courses; this applies to all courses.

We are also currently changing the way that courses are booked at HQ:

- All Instructor course notifications must come through your branch, with a letter of recommendation endorsed by your Regional Coach.
- All other courses can be booked as before, by contacting HQ and getting your name in the course book. In all cases a 50% deposit will be required.

As some of you know all Regional Coaches have had to undertake a CRBS Disclosure check, so have all new Instructors. This also means that all candidates who have been on a course, but have not yet finished their assessments will need to be CRBS checked as well - no check, no number! This simply means that you will not be signed off as an Instructor until you get the all clear from Disclosure Scotland.

In the event of a BI returning to training following a break of more than 18 months, they will be required to attend a BI course, as a refresher, and to undertake the CRBS check. If you have questions regarding this development please contact Frank Connor via the office.

Regarding communication with myself - I have had to refrain from using email as a tool of communication for a number of reasons, viruses, the sheer number of correspondents and the way some people misinterpret and then take offence about the written word. Time was also a big factor, with on average 8 to 10 hours a week. This meant I was spending one of my working days on NDO business, and as I am self-employed I could not sustain this. If you have any correspondence for me, please send to HQ where Alicia or Ann Marie will forward it on. Alternately if you would like to speak to me, contact me by phone:

Weekdays between 7pm & 9.45pm and weekends between 2pm & 9.45pm:

My mobile can be used any time for emergencies; you could also text me and I will phone you as soon as is practical. If you leave a message I will always endeavour to get back to you as soon as

possible.

BI assessments - there has been a change in the BI assessments:

- The lecture will now be covered on the day of the course. Candidates will not be required to give a lecture, but will be instructed/guided on how they should construct and deliver a lecture.
- The two-pool assessments, sub-aqua and snorkelling can now be done in the one session.
- The two open water assessments will stay the same.

Time limits between attendance on a course and final assessments is, as always, 12 months. It is however sometimes the case that candidates cannot fulfil this requirement, and have asked for special dispensation. These requests have not always been approved by the NDO and as a consequence, with no written records kept it has come to light that some candidates have felt that it is possible to take up to four years or more to finish their assessments. As the training is developing and with possible changes taking place this is not an acceptable situation.

As of now, any candidate who feels they need extra time to finish their assessments will have to apply in writing to the NDO for dispensation, outlining their reasons. The NDO will then reply in writing and we will have an official record, which will be kept on file, enabling us to monitor the assessments and the needs of both individuals and branches.

It is felt that any candidate who takes longer than 18 months, or has periods of inactivity as an Instructor will have to attend a further BI course. They will also be reappraised in the water by their Regional Coach before they can get signed off as a full Instructor.

Crossovers from other agencies - there is no Instructor level crossover either to or from ScotSAC. For diver level crossovers, each case will be looked at individually by the branch DO and the Regional coach, as every one will need to be judged on their own merit.

Safe and happy diving.

*Kevin Webb (NDO)*