



I'm only here for the beer!



Phil and his snorkel



another year gone, time to clear up, only 365 days to go till next year

The Alternative Solstice Dive

Divers - Mature, sensible individuals? Of course they are. Here's the evidence ...

THE COUNTDOWN for Christmas seems to get earlier and earlier every year by the end of October now we are being told there are only so many shopping days left before the big day ... Well if you walk around Ullapool at the beginning of June you'll hear people whispering and nodding to each other ... 'I cannot believe it's only three weeks to go' 'the last one was only just yesterday' ... 'is it really that time of year already?'

No, people in Ullapool don't celebrate Christmas over the solstice weekend, the talk is all about the Ullapool Sub Aqua Club's annual summer BBQ on Isle Martin. But like Christmas, it doesn't just creep up on you, it belts towards you over the horizon like a DSMB heading for the surface and before you know it you're hunting out the tent, the 'Skin-So-Soft' and taking orders for carry outs to be bought up from Inverness.

For some reason in recent years we've been really lucky with the weather, it's not often you could plan a BBQ in the north of Scotland and get glorious weather three years on the trot. The sort of weather that makes getting into a drysuit an unpleasant experience, it's hot, you're sweaty. But the minute you roll back into the pristine waters of Loch Broom it becomes apparent why you're doing it all - crystal clear water and viz that can only be dreamed of in other parts of the UK.

As in previous years we were joined for the weekend by friends of the branch from Aberdeen and Glasgow, sadly Ullapool SAC's London set, the Gucci girls, weren't able to make it. This year we invited our new Regional Coach, Kev

Watson, to the party. Was this really going to be the best time for him to meet the branch? Trapped on an island with enough drink to float a navy - answer that one yourself!

On Saturday morning, in something approximating a military logistics operation, we began the task of ferrying supplies to Isle Martin - things like the BBQ, wood, stereos, food and people. Meanwhile a group of hunter-gatherer types headed out to collect essential menu items to put on the BBQ.

If the number of scallops in your bag after a dive is the measure of a man, then some folk had planted a good bag full the night before, or they'd be better suited to clubbing woolly mammoths over the head during the last ice age; while others just won't even talk about it!

Suffice to say a quick dive in the morning yielded a good harvest of scallops and we headed back to the island to sit in the sunshine, have a drink and help prepare the food.

Isle Martin has got a couple of croft houses and a bunkhouse that can be rented out from the Isle Martin Trust. The facilities are minimal - somewhere to sleep, somewhere to boil a kettle and a toilet. But what more could you need?

Anybody who has been to one of the USAC BBQs before will tell you that these aren't just your normal run of the mill bangers, burgers and beer BBQs. These are scallop kebab, prawn, roast lamb and vodka tomato BBQs.

Yes Vodka tomatos - don't ask! But after a quick burst of ... 'no thanks, I don't like tomatoes' ... 'go on, try them, they've got vodka in them!' ... 'really?' ... 'aye, they're really good, don't taste of tomato at all!' 'phoar, they're good, give me another!' You get the picture! And with Darrell sorting us with prawns it was set to be a good night.

For some people it was their first BBQ with the club, new trainees had joined, some had qualified, and last year's trainees watched on with glee knowing

what lay ahead for those for those had just been signed off. Congratulations by the way Phil on achieving your Sports Diver award from everyone in the branch.

Of course it's nothing to do with ScotSAC and alcohol should always be taken in moderation. Normally divers like to keep liquid out of their snorkel when their using it. Not however when lying on your back with one end in (what you think is) a single pint of Boddingtons. It wasn't long before last year's trainees gave a nodding wink of 'that was me last year mate, glad it was you this time!'

But it's not all about food and drink, it's about food, drink and good craic. It would be easy to list different highlights of the evening, there were so many of them, whether it was Taffy falling overboard using his video camera, Big Steve chopping wood in 'those' shorts or the wig that got passed around but then stuck on Andy's head. As the party went on the stories of underwater escapades became more and more elaborate, more daring and more death defying.

But if there is one thing about divers, especially drunk ones, some of them can snore for Scotland and while stragglers headed off for a few hours sleep in the pale light of dawn, others didn't get any sleep as the walls vibrated in time to what only could be described as an angry walrus! I'll never share a room with my RC again!

On Sunday morning while Jim cooked a traditional healthy Glasgow breakfast of lorne sausage, fried eggs, black pudding and bacon swimming in oil the BBQ was fired up again and bacon rolls were passed around the rest of us. All too soon we were clearing up and getting ready to go back over to the mainland. And like all good things, it was over, back to the real world again, back to work as if nothing has happened. But don't worry, it's only 337 days to go until the next one.