

Graeme Forsyth admits that life as a regional coach is not all blood, sweat and tears. In fact more meeting up with pals, some scenic diving and some nice scallop suppers ...

Life & Times Of A Regional Coach

WHY BE a regional coach? I get asked that question a lot. On the negative side, I have more than enough instructing to do with my own club, there's no 'pay' to speak of and there is a general perception that it is a bit of a thankless task.

Normally regional instructors are given clubs reasonably close to home. I am however fortunate to have family members spread across the west of Scotland, so felt able to take on clubs from more diverse locations. I've been a regional coach for a few years now, and thought I'd share some of my experiences in the hope of encouraging a few more regional instructors to put their names forward and join our dwindling numbers.

It was a cold January morning when Don Lees and myself set out for Campbeltown. As regional coach for Campbeltown Sub Aqua Club I had offered my help and Diving Officer Livingston Russel had taken up my offer of a weekend's diving and lecturing. Don had kindly offered his help and it was gratefully accepted so we set off on a clear but cold morning, with the weather staying fine until we hit the Mull of Kintyre (bet you're all humming the tune to that bloody Wings song now) - then it started to blow up.

When we arrived at Campbeltown and met up with Livingston and some members of Campbeltown SAC we realised that diving was going to be out for the day so it was back to Livingston's house, a very welcomed meal and down to lectures.

The weather the following day was no better and much as I was looking forward to a dive it wasn't to be on that particular trip.

Far from being a wasted trip we met new friends (Don of course knows just about everyone and was meeting up with old ones) and were glad to be of service.

A big thanks to Livingston for feeding and sheltering us, and the rest of Campbeltown SAC for making us welcome. There's another trip planned soon and hopefully the weather will allow for some diving.

On the way back home Don asked:

"What other clubs have you got?"

"Dunoon, Clyde and Arran." I replied.

"Been to Dunoon and Greenock," replied Don, "never been to Arran, though. When are we going and where will we stay?"

"I've got a trip planned and got family on the island." I said.

"That's that settled then." declared Don.

Excellent I thought - some help and I didn't even have to ask.

In contrast to our trip to Campbeltown, the trip to Arran started out on a much better foot - it was a bright, sunny April morning when we took the ferry over to Arran. As Don had never been before and we weren't due to meet Diving Officer John Ferris and the rest of Arran SAC until later that evening we picked up Auntie May (whom we were staying with) and gave Don a quick tour of the island.

Don acted like the perfect tourist - walking around with camera in hand taking photos of everyone and anything.

Later on that evening we met up with John and some other members of the club, gave some lectures, had a good chat, a few beers and arranged some diving for the following day.

The next morning dawned bright and sunny and Don and myself met Sean Ferris at the pier and headed out for a dive on the RIB. Sean took us on an excellent cliff dive where he took some great photos with me pointing everywhere as there was so much life to see.

During the surface interval, which we spent at the pub (no alcohol involved - yet!) I asked if there were any scallops about as Aunt May is very fond of them.

"Sure," said Sean, "next dive I'll take you to get some."

As I had forgotten my goody bag I asked Don if he had one he could sell me (silly question!) and after getting one at a knockdown price we headed out for a

second dive. Sure enough there were plenty of scallops about and while Sean took some more photos I started to harvest a few - then realised that I'd left the goody bag on the bloody RIB!

After another wonderful dive I came up with hands and pockets full of scallops to be met by Don with a grin on his face holding up the goody bag.

"Want to buy it back?" I asked.

"No!" was the polite but firm reply.

A fine meal was had by Aunt May, Don and myself of pan fried scallops with vegetables in a cream sauce made by myself (I know it's hard to believe) washed down with Morgans spiced 'n coke (because I couldn't find any Buckfast) then over to John's for a chat and a beer before heading back off the island the next morning.

Once again a big thanks to John and his wife for supplying the tea, biscuits and beer, Sean for taking me diving, the rest of Arran SAC for making us welcome and last but not least to Aunt May for putting us up and putting up with us. I'd also like to apologise to my family on the island whom I didn't get to visit on that trip but I'll catch up with you all next time.

Thanks also to Diving Officer Jan Crawford for making me welcome - I've had a few trips over there and I'm glad to have been of help to them.

As this is one of my closer clubs it's easier to make frequent trips to visit and as long as Steve keeps reminding me when the last ferry is I don't miss it like I did the last time!

Thanks also to Clyde SAC and DO Ged McGlone for making me welcome. My own club Johnstone SAC with DO Jim Blakely at the helm often meet with the Clyde crew for some diving at local dive sites and there's always a plentiful supply of biscuits and tea when I visit Ged's house.

Ged and I go a long way back, in fact Ged was one of my instructors and if it hadn't been for his patience and enthusiasm for the sport I may not be where I am just now, in a position to be able to pass that enthusiasm and knowledge on. Thanks, Ged!

Which brings me back to the point - "Why did I become a regional coach?" Yes, it's extra work but I can't help thinking that I get as much if not more out of it than I put in.

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white and red anemone



do you like my tale?



anemone



crab

the above photos were taken during Graeme Forsyth's visit to Arran and are reproduced courtesy of Sean Ferris

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