



Bert Smith has been diving for nearly 40 years - and in that time he has taken his skills all over the world teaching new divers and improving the knowledge of existing ones. For the past fourteen years Bert (left in picture) has resided in Scotland and been a member of ScotSAC ...



■ WHERE DID YOU LEARN TO DIVE?

● I learned to dive in Plymouth in 1969. I was in the army and at that time I was living and working in Plymouth. Me and a mate saw two-second hand dive kits advertised for just £10 each and thought - we'll have those. We bought our kits and the vendor filled our tanks. He gave us some pretty basic instructions on how to use them and that was that - we were straight off the jetty and into the sea. We loved it and went back to get the cylinders refilled as soon as we could. However I didn't actually 'learn' to dive until I was stationed in Singapore where I joined a diving club and realised that there were proper safety measures that should be used when diving.

■ WHAT TYPE OF DIVER ARE YOU?

● I am an adventurous diver who loves teaching and passing on my skills to others who are keen to become better divers.

■ WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PIECE OF KIT?

● That has to be my autoair and the simple reason for that is that it saves lives. I will give my valve to someone without hesitation and go on to autoair in order to carry out a rescue, in fact I did it quite recently when two people who could very easily have died didn't because of it. It is certainly one piece of kit I wouldn't go diving without.

■ DIVE BUDDY - WHO DO YOU ENJOY DIVING WITH MOST?

● This would be my good lady - Christine Lyon. She is my buddy in life and in the water. I am a terrible depth seeker and without fail she is always where she should be further down the reef when I come back up. She is also incredibly supportive and encouraging throughout all the training I do.

■ FAVOURITE DIVE SITE?

● Anything that is deep, dark and dangerous! But if I had to be specific then I would say the *Kintyre* in the Clyde.

Not many divers like it because it is too far down, but I love everything about it. I would visit it every day if I could - however it is not that easy to arrange trips to the *Kintyre* because you have to twist peoples' arms to get them to come with you. It is certainly one of the best wrecks in the Clyde and definitely one of the least visited.

■ BEST COUNTRY VISITED?

● Egypt and the Red Sea, without a doubt. I have been to Australia and dived on the Great Barrier Reef but it has been so over-dived that you have to go miles out to get any decent diving. With the Red Sea you get more of everything - the marine life is prolific and there is everything you could possibly want to see all in one place. The fact that

it is only a four-hour flight to get there is an added bonus - although I would travel far further to experience the diving that is on offer there.

■ WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GO DIVING?

● The love of it! "I cannae get enough of it" (said in Northumberland accent)! I started back in 1969 and would dive every single day for the rest of my life if I could. Any opportunity and I am there - kit on and ready to submerge myself, whether that's in the Solway, Nith, wherever - I don't care.

■ DREAM DIVE BUDDY?

● I have to say my good lady Christine or I may get a slap - but in her absence it would be my mate Tom Ward from Newcastle. Tom is my buddy, not only in diving but in other sports - we ski together whenever we can; and in socialising - we both enjoy a glass of rum. We have the same enthusiasm for the above three things and so to do any of them with him is a dream.

■ DREAM DIVE DESTINATION?

● I would like to dive the wrecks of the Suez Canal - a sort of wreck safari. I love wrecks, getting inside them and over them and under them and all of that - nothing beats it! I am an underwater archaeologist, or some might say a scrap man!

■ BEST DIVE BOOK EVER READ?

● *Goldfinger* by Keith Jessop is fantastic. It is the true story of one man's discovery of the ocean's richest secrets and covers various wrecks in Orkney, the Shetlands and Northern Ireland throughout, in fact this is the reason I love the book so much because I can relate to these wrecks having dived them myself. I have actually been there and that gives me a real buzz when reading it. It really is a fabulous book and a must for any wreck lover out there.

■ WHAT BUGS YOU MOST ABOUT DIVING?

● Old instructors who refuse to keep themselves updated with the new training regulations. They refuse to keep abreast with the modern ways of doing things and seem to have the belief that if it was okay 30 years ago it still is now! Wrong - things are usually changed for a reason and for the better and they endanger not only themselves by not moving with the times but others also.

■ HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE DIVING TO NON-DIVERS?

● There is only one other group of people in the world that know what it is like to go diving and that is the astronauts. They go to experience the feeling of weightlessness that can be achieved through perfect neutral buoyancy. Diving really will give you a buzz; it's unlike anything you've ever experienced before. The only problem is that once you start you will be hooked for the rest of your life.