

Conference Success

ScotSAC held its first National Conference for almost a decade in November, and delegates enjoyed a varied programme of speakers and seminars at the event in Oban. Michael Plane reports on the action ...

BRANCHLINES

THIS WAS the first conference we have had for umpteen years, Steve Liscoe who runs Tidal Volumes, purveyors of fine second hand dive books, reckons 1998 was the last one. Since then we have been running an annual Diving Officer conference but attendance was limited to Branch Diving Officers and members of the National Diving Council etc.

However the General Committee and the National Diving Council thought it was time to run a conference for divers and not just ScotSAC divers but divers from all and any training agency or none if that's your preference. It was good to welcome Sean Gribben (NDO of BSAC) and Edward Haynes (BSAC council member); also good to meet John Sinclair and his wife Marie, John is the top man at Suunto UK.

Starting at the ungodly hour of 9.00am first stop was the coffee table for a wake-up caffeine boost. This set us back a bit but a goodly crowd of 70 odd were back in the main hall to hear Kevin Miller welcome them and start things off by introducing our first speaker Mark Lawrence of ADUS.

Mark rather teased the audience by taking us through the history of the technology used by him and his team. Sonar imaging has been around for some time but new high resolution systems have improved immensely the detail that can be recorded.

He showed us how it is now possible to map contours in the seabed as well as wrecks and features that stand clear of the bottom. Images of the seabed



Divers get ready for one of the sessions at the Oban conference

where the *Mary Rose* once lay and others captured when sands had shifted after a storm revealing the prow of an unknown wreck.

Another exciting project was surveying the *USS Richard Montgomery* a WW2 liberty ship sunk in the Medway and carrying 7000 tons of high explosives. This type of detailed survey negated the need to use divers and gave a much better idea of the state of the wreck.

However he saved the best for last - the 3D tour of *HMS Royal Oak* was simply stunning. Seeing the whole wreck lying on the seabed was amazing; then we started moving round the bow and along the starboard side showing clearly where the four torpedoes struck round the stern and back to the port bow where we started.

You can download a sample showing the *Bremmer* at www.wrecksight.com. A DVD

covering all the German wrecks in Scapa will be released in spring 2008.

This will be extremely useful for clubs and individuals visiting for the first time as it will allow them to plan which part of the wreck they want to visit. **SCOTTISH DIVER** are looking forward to reviewing this when it becomes available.

By now our numbers had been augmented by those who spent Friday night in Oban and were shall we say running a bit behind. At this point we departed from the usual course of events and instead of another speaker, delegates could choose either to have a long coffee break or go to one of the breakout rooms. There they had the choice in the morning of the RNLi, Underwater Photography, Community Of Aran Seabed Trust or they could drop into the NDC/GC room and have a natter about ScotSAC. This proved to be a



It was fascinating to learn that archaeologists who have been unable to find settlements from certain eras now think they may be offshore as sea levels have risen over the years.

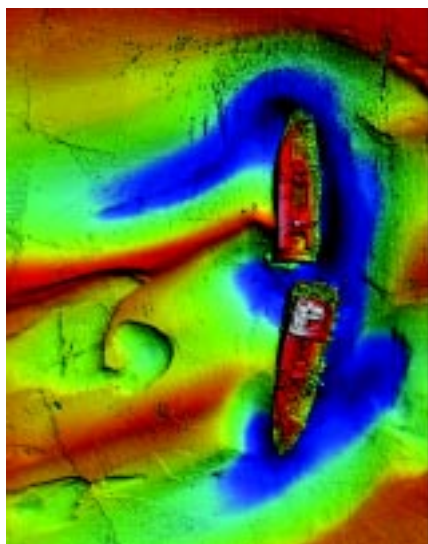
popular format and one we will probably adopt for future conferences.

Back in the main hall for a talk on Hyperbaric Medicine by Martin Sawyer from Dunstaffnage. Martin reiterated the need for divers to be aware of what was happening to their bodies when put under pressure. He talked about bubble formation and the fact that there was a danger that divers were forgetting the basics and relying on computers, it is still important to have a working knowledge of tables. He also announced that Dunstaffnage would have a new bigger chamber next year, hopefully it will be underused.

Lunch was of a very high standard with homemade soup and sandwiches and plenty of them. After lunch more choices as the first session we were all back in the classrooms. This time there was the opportunity to learn all about nudibranchs, listen to the coast-guard, and catch up with Calum Duncan and Owen Paisley explaining how you can get involved with seasearch projects and the work of MCS.

Most popular was Philip Robertson of Historic Scotland who is responsible for recording and where possible protecting our marine heritage. I think all who attended Philip's talk were surprised by the breadth of subject matter this covered from fairly modern wrecks like those in Scapa to log canoes found in the muddy shores of a river. It was fascinating to learn that archaeologists who have been unable to find settlements from certain eras now think they may be offshore as sea levels have risen over the years.

Innes McCartney wound the conference up with two presentations, one about three U-boats found off the north coast of Cornwall and secondly about the two submarines discovered off Eyemouth. Identifying submarines is a detective story and Innes is a master story teller.



One of Mrk Lawrence's solar images



National Diving Officer Kevin Miller introduces Martin Sawyer from the hyperbaric facility at Dunstaffnage

First he has to dive them and photograph and video as much as possible of the construction details. From here he can use his vast knowledge of u-boat building to determine what type of craft it is and when it was built. For instance the type of snorkel and how it was deployed or stored, the direction finding ariel and a host of other things where one boat differed from another. Innes can then determine what each boat was and from the damage inflicted he was able to determine they were all sunk by mines.

Of course there is a human side to these discoveries. Innes and his team were able to inform the descendants of those who perished and who had been given conflicting information about where their loved ones lay. One lady was heartbroken still by the loss of her young husband during the war. I was impressed by the fact that Innes is always sensitive to the fate of these brave men of both sides and the fact that he treats their resting place with respect.

Earlier this year Innes came up to Eyemouth to identify a submarine thought to be H11 which in fact turned out to be a u-boat however another wreck several miles away he was able to positively identify as H11 from its unique torpedo tubes. Innes is of course the author of many books about submarines and runs his own company Periscope Publishing and we have reviewed several of their books in **SCOTTISH DIVER**.

After that it was eyes down for the obligatory raffle. Top prize a pair of Scubapro regulators won by Mark Warnock, a Northern Diver BCD went to Marjory Leighton. Lots of other prizes were dispensed and our thanks to everyone who donated prizes.

ScotSAC chairman Jack Morrison ended the day by thanking everyone who came and especially Sam Paske who was the major force behind the organisation of this most successful conference. Now where will we have it next year?

The Scottish Sub Aqua Club would like to thank the following for their contributions and assistance towards the ScotSAC 2007 Dive Conference:

Scubapro
Dons Dive Store
Emperor Divers
Lloyds Private Banking
Dive Norway
Northern Lights Charters
ADUS
Aquapress
Lochaline Dive Centre
Diver Magazine
Tidal Volumes
Aquastars
Deep Blue Dive
Northern Diver
Otter
Seasearch
Marine Conservation Society
Historic Scotland
COAST
Scottish Hyperbaric Medicine
Maritime and Coastguard Agency
RNLI
Philip Robertson (Historic Scotland)
Jim Anderson
Jack Morrison
Innes McCartney
Oban High School
Scott's Sandwiches

CONGRATS!

CONGRATULATIONS TO Frank Johnstone on achieving his Sport Diver qualification and to Craig McVicar, Brian McKenna and Alasdair Reid for achieving their Master Diver qualification. From all at Kilmarnock Sub Aqua Club.



Irvine SAC Hit The Big Three O



THE RECEPTIONIST at The Gables Hotel said: "Irvine Sub Aqua Club dinner, just follow the signs for the penthouse". A penthouse in a one story building, that's a novel idea.

Mrs M and I are here at the invitation of Irvine branch to help celebrate their 30th anniversary. During that very pleasant time having drinks while waiting for the dinner to start, there was ample time to peruse the photographic history of the branch conveniently plastered on the walls. Within three years of formation they had 50 members and membership has stayed much the same till the present day.

Regular have-a-go nights and providing the members with regular diving, air and a good

social life are the ingredients for their success. Not to mention their charity work, either helping out by providing cover or taking part, they have become part of the local community and featured often in the local papers.

For the full story take a look at the branch website it's an object lesson on how to run a successful dive club. Meanwhile we have sat down and are enjoying a lovely dinner but only after being cajoled and dare I say it bullied into parting with lots of loot for raffle tickets.

After the dinner came the never-ending raffle with loads of fabulous prizes that seemed to go to one table. Not that I'm complaining I won a bottle of champagne, a half bottle of Gouse with a hip flask and a bag. The raffle was actually great

fun and some new friendships were made as people tried to ingratiate themselves with those who won weekends at luxury hotels, hope it's worth it.

Frank Long thanked everyone past and present for making the night and the last 30 years a success. He picked out ???? as a founder and still going strong and the man responsible for the photographic history. Last up was me who just talked a lot of balls and wished the branch happy birthday and we all retired to the bar as divers do.

Thanks to Frank and all the members of Irvine branch for inviting me to an excellent night. Now what branch is next for a celebration?

Jack Morrison.

ANNUAL SCHOOL SALE

Full Equipment Package

BC, Reg, Octo, Console, Drysuit pack, Thinsulate, 10ltr or 12ltr Cylinder

rrp approx £1364.75

offer £675

Less than 1/2 price!!

• Aqualung Latitude (weight integral) BC • Aqualung Titan LX Supreme Reg • Aqualung LX Octopus • Aqualung double console

rrp approx £689.80 **£345**

Only 1 year old

Commercial Drysuit Package

with Thinsulate, valves, hose, hood & bag

rrp approx £508.00 **£249**

Ladies and Gents sizes

Full Equipment Package

BC, Reg, Octo, Console, Drysuit pack, Thinsulate, 10ltr or 12ltr Cylinder

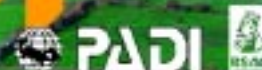
rrp approx £1364.75

offer £675

Less than 1/2 price!!

RobinHood Watersports
www.roho.co.uk

All equipment approx 1 yr old



152 Leeds Road Heckmondwike West Yorkshire WF16 9BJ
Tel: 01924 444888 • dive@roho.co.uk • Website:www.roho.co.uk