



Otter Wonderful Dry Suit

AFTER 8 YEARS of diving, my Otter Narvic drysuit was still performing brilliantly. The seals were a bit worn and the boots and zip probably didn't have too much life left in them so I was thinking, should I replace all these parts or should I order a new suit? It was a tough choice as the suit itself was still in great shape, unfortunately I'm not quite the same shape as I was eight years ago and the suit was a little tight on me, (always a great excuse). The decision was made to get myself a new suit and I was perfectly happy to try an Otter suit again.

So I decided to take a day off work and headed down south with Stevie Gibson of TT Diving in Bonnyrigg. It was a wild day and the wind howled and the rain intensified as we headed south. We soon arrived at Otter Watersports in Bradford where John Womack, the owner of Otter Watersports introduced me to the team.

Two walls of the showroom are lined with suits in various styles, colours and sizes. I was fairly open to suggestions about the type of suit; my only real requirements were that it should be a membrane suit with a neoprene neck seal. The reasons for this were that I would be dipping my toe into trimix

diving and I wanted to avoid big buoyancy changes at depth that are found with some neoprene suits. The neck seal was purely a personal choice. If I wear a latex neck seal for anything more than a long weekend, I look as if I have had a serious shaving incident or tried to hang myself.

I found myself drawn back to the Britannic range, it's the top of the Otter range and widely regarded by many technical divers and sporties alike to be one of the best membrane drysuit available in the UK.

Soon I was trying on suits, and if I wasn't wet enough already with getting from the car park to the shop, I was soon melting in a 200gsm Otter commercial undersuit. The first suit I tried on was a blue one, which would be a nice change from my previous black suit, but as it was the same size as my previous suit I felt it pinching in all the same places. If I tried to talk you would think I had been breathing helium (you get the picture).

Next up was a black bodied Britannic with orange flashes on the arms. This was too tight as well and it was time for me to speak up and advise the fitter that this was the case. That's the whole idea of going down to the showroom. Getting a suit that fits you like a dream is what it's all about and whilst the people there can get you in the ballpark, only you will know when a suit feels right.

The next one I saw was a black Britannic Telescopic. It had a neoprene neck seal and latex cuff seals, but these had neoprene covers for warmth. A front entry zip is something I need when conducting solo photographic dives. This was looking good, so I tried it on. Immediately it felt better than the others, there was room in the suit and I could really move, squat down, crawl on the floor and get my hands behind my head. On the down side the neck seal was too big and the boots were too small. This was no problem however, as I had my neck measured and one and a half inches were to come off the neck and the boots would be replaced with size tens. The body being telescopic was for me an advantage too, when taking pictures I find flexibility and ease of movement to be a serious benefit (it also adds a bit of leeway



Mike Clark models his new drysuit

should I take up bodybuilding or something!

So that was it, suit chosen and although I would not be able to walk out the shop with it, it was delivered to me a week later. It fitted like a dream apart from the neck seal which required to be sent back to have just a wee bit more taken out of it.

Whilst I was down at Otter Watersports, John took time to show me around. I saw the office and dispatch areas and all the areas in between where the suits are cut from sheets of neoprene, not by any fancy computer system but by hand using templates and chalk marks to outline the various sections of the suit.

Here I met a lot of guys and girls that make the Otter suits. I saw what I thought was a pile of off cuts but this was in fact cut sections of a suit just about to be assembled, glued and stitched. Further along the production line boots, zips and seals were being added to almost complete suits. Then at the end of the line, a row of inflated suits were being pressure tested to ensure they are 100% leakproof. Out of the production room other points of interest were a vast tank for leak detection and suit repair, air compressors and oxygen booster pumps and trimix mixing stations.

Choosing my new suit, viewing the goodies in the large shop and my tour by John around the factory made for a fantastic day. I received the suit back just in time for a Scapa Flow trip and I had a week's diving in it. It was so comfy it felt like I didn't have a suit on at all. This was due to the good fit but also due to a new "Skin" material that the suit is made of. It's certainly a lot lighter than my last suit but is said to be just as strong, I certainly hope this will be the case. It's definitely more flexible, which is also great.

I'm hoping to have 8 years plus out of this suit and even if I do put on or lose a wee bit of weight, it's a telescopic suit and should always fit just right.

My thanks go to John Womack and all the team at Otter for being such good sports and to Stevie Gibson of TT Diving.

Mike Clark



John Womack next to the test tank

The Jedi's Choice

THE NEW IMPROVED Frogman Torch arrived in a nice presentation box along with a lanyard and batteries, a quick check to ensure that the single 'o' ring was greased and the torch was ready to dive with, straight out of the box.

My initial reaction was that this was a quality torch. The body comprises a shockproof ABS construction, which feels very solid and has a 60 metre depth rating. The head of the torch is finished with polished high-grade stainless steel. So in the looks department this torch scored well, but how would it fair underwater?

I strapped the Frogman Torch to my camera strobe, thinking to use it as a spotting light. I had a similar E-Led torch from another major manufacturer mounted as a focus light on my camera and I would make a direct comparison of these two torches.

I dropped in on the wreck of the *East Neuk* off of Eyemouth (thanks to Iain and

Jim of Marine Quest) and the visibility was a pleasing 8 metres, good for a cold November day. This enabled me to back away from the wreck, to take pictures of whole sections, such as the boiler or engine block. In the good light my E-led focus torch could hardly put a dot of light on the boiler.

The Led Lenser Frogman Torch however, was illuminating a bright spot on the boiler. In the end there was no real comparison as the Frogman torch was far more impressive. So in the power department this torch scores very highly as well.

I would go as far to say that if I mounted the Frogman Torch as my focus light I would very rarely have to switch on my main light, for most of my normal diving. This torch should certainly not only be thought of as a back-up torch.

How does this small torch pack such a punch? Well to start the Frogman has a 1.5w Cree Led chip that is 25 times brighter than a standard Led and 50 times brighter than a standard bulb. This powerful light is then focused by the lens, which is situated in front of a patented reflector system. This results in the projection of a long and powerful beam. This beam has minimal edge spill and illuminates only the object at hand and not the surrounding particles in the water, thus enabling you to see further in poor conditions.

For the often-murky waters of Scotland this is a big advantage, but as my test above proves the torch performs very well in clearer conditions too.

What advantages does the new Frogman Torch have over the older model? Firstly there is the previously mentioned Cree Led Chip which provides more light. This also has a lower power consumption and it's claimed that you can expect 50 hours of light from one set of 4 AA batteries.

The main difference however, is the addition to this model of a magnetic switch. The previous model suffered badly when the head of the torch required to be rotated to turn the torch on and off. Many divers found this to be impossible to perform any deeper than 30 metres down. Thankfully though the addition of the switch solves this problem and makes the torch easy to turn on and off underwater.

My only gripe with the Frogman Torch is that whilst the body of the torch is very smooth for comfort's sake, there are no attaching holes apart from the lanyard hole at the end of the torch. This makes it difficult to attach the torch to a helmet or a camera with bungee cord or tie wraps. A rough area, a couple of grooves or another hole in the casing near the head end would make it much easier to secure this torch. That really is the only negative thing I could say.

The price is £45 which is £13 more expensive than the similar e-Led torch I tested it against but I would say that it's money well spent for a tough, powerful, well constructed and economic torch that will last a lifetime with no bulbs to replace. To put it another way if Luke Skywalker arrived on earth with £45 to spend The New Led Lenser Frogman torch would be his light sabre of choice!

Mike Clark



small but bright

She-P

FINALLY A working solution for lady divers! Thanks to better dry suits and cylinder configurations, people are spending more time underwater, and if they keep drinking plenty of liquids, there will come a time when nature calls.

The She-P makes it possible for female divers to comfortably use a P-valve while diving in a dry suit instead of using diapers.

The She-P is a soft silicone device featuring a reservoir with 'output' tube, that has flexible 'wings' that are designed to be adhered to the skin with a medical adhesive intended for use with prosthetic devices.

This results in a proper seal and comfortable urinating.

The P-valve catheter condom



for women costs £71. For further details visit www.dirdirect.com

Shine A Light



THE AQUASUN eLED Dive Light takes LED performance to the maximum when underwater.

To achieve this, Underwater Kinetics have taken advantage of the fact that LEDs are most intense when kept cool. Two high intensity LEDs have been attached to a heat sink which is in direct contact with the water through the front lens. This patented system cools the LEDs and allows them to burn almost twice as bright underwater.

The white colour of the LED light penetrates water better than light from conventional incandescent lamps, allowing greater visibility underwater. In addition an electronic circuit monitors the LEDs and prevents overheating when used out of water and allows the selection of full power or battery saving mode.

A unique reflector combines the beams of two LEDs into a single beam which is twice as bright. Even though the LEDs are extremely efficient in power usage, they exceed the capacity of disposable alkaline batteries and must be powered by a rechargeable battery pack.

For more information visit: www.sea-sea.com

Keep Your Keys Safe

WHERE IS YOUR favourite place to hide your car keys before you go on a dive? Behind the fuel cap or on top of a tyre? I recently went for a dive with my keys in my drysuit pocket, which was a rather costly error on my part.

There is now a solution that could nullify the need for these crafty hiding places. Kamasa has introduced a padlock and Keysafe 2 in 1 device. It comprised a zinc cast body and a hardened steel shackle that

feels very strong and secure. The unit is opened by a 4 wheel combination lock, which is protected by a rubber flap that will keep dust out, I would imagine it will keep the worst of the rain out too. I will keep monitoring how the unit stands up to the elements and

keep you posted.

You can choose your own code and this helps when it comes to remembering it.

I tried the unit out and found it easy to use, attaching the padlock to my towing ring on the car. It worked a treat and made a great and much safer alternative than trusting lady luck and a favourite hiding place.

A nice touch I also thought was the rear of the device is covered in a foam pad, which will protect your car's paintwork from this heavy unit.

The only niggle I had was that if you have a few keys on your ring it may need careful packing into the key chamber to fit, although this area is quite large and will accommodate bulky key fob keys.

All in all a good device retailing at around £18 which is a lot cheaper than replacing a flooded key fob.

More info at www.toolconnection.co.uk

Mike Clark



Keep In Touch

A NEW group text messaging service has been launched by ScubaText. The service which lets dive clubs communicate with their members through text messaging has been welcomed by BSAC. It's cost-free and provides instant notifications for clubs across the UK.

The SMS service is a free, quick and easy-to-use group text alert service for the clubs. It allows clubs to contact all of their members by sending a single message, either through the ScubaText website, or through an existing mobile phone.

Mary Tetley, Chief Executive of the British Sub-Aqua Club, said: "We're delighted to support this valuable service and encourage our members to get involved. Whether it's to cancel a dive, notify members of a change of venue, or even let everyone know about the end of month get together, the innovative service allows clubs to contact all its members at the same time in a hassle free way." One diving officer said:

"ScubaText is amazing!

Organising dives and other events has never been so easy and efficient. I can relax knowing every single one of our members gets the news at an instant."

While another added: "It wasn't hard to convince our members to be part of a scheme that notifies them about both wet and dry events. Everyone wanted to get involved with the ScubaText scheme and we've already noticed increased participation on all of our dives this year."

Dan Parker, ScubaText co-founder, said: "We hope that ScubaText becomes an integral part of organising dives up and down the country. It's great to see so many clubs already using the service and making use of being able to get a message to hundreds of members across a vast area in a fast, flexible, and dynamic way."

For more information about how ScubaText can help your club, visit: www.scubatext.co.uk.

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