

Johnstone SAC's Diving Officer - Fiona Watson

classes herself as an 'average diver' who likes to

dive wrecks and research them when the weather

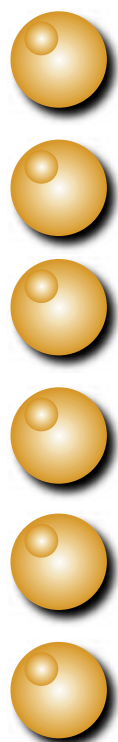
takes a turn for the worse! A water baby at heart

when she is not diving she can be found sea-

kayaking or playing in the surf near her home ...



DIVER PROFILE



■ WHERE DID YOU LEARN TO DIVE?

● In the murky waters of the River Tees with BSAC43 branch. My first dive was the *Guildford* off South Gare, Redcar. The visibility was only about 2m, but the whole dive still sticks in my memory as superb.

■ WHAT TYPE OF DIVER ARE YOU?

● I love wrecks, particularly the smaller steamships, the more intact the engines are the better! It's not just the actual dive, but the research and history behind an individual wreck that I find fascinating. Having said that, I'm happy pottering around a local reef in 10m watching the fish and seals.

■ WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PIECE OF KIT?

● My new Otter Velvet drysuit – after months of soggy diving I finally had two dry dives this weekend. It's the most comfortable suit I've ever had.

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

● I've been really lucky to dive with many fantastic divers, however my favourite has to be my daughter, Naomi. I always enjoy diving with her, be it a site that's new to both of us or showing her around a site I know well. Grow your own dive buddy, a long term plan, but definitely worth it!

■ FAVOURITE DIVE-SITE?

● That's easy, has to be the *Gwladmena*. A steamship, she lies upright on white sand in Lerwick harbour. The descent down the line, followed by

a slow meander through the hold area, over the engines and boilers past the lignum vitae prop-shaft, it's always a good dive.

■ BEST COUNTRY VISITED?

● Wherever I end up, I keep coming to the same conclusion, I enjoy our own Scottish dive sites best of all! Shetland and Orkney offer superb diving, after 12 years living in Shetland, I've still not dived every site I'd like to visit.

■ WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GO DIVING?

● I enjoy it! It's partly the exploration factor that I motivates me. Whether it's a new site with something to discover, or on a well dived wreck which uncovers new finds as it disintegrates – there is always something different to see!

■ DREAM DIVE BUDDY?

● One of my original dive instructors, Jeff Pape, has been diving since he converted a calor gas cylinder back in the 50's. He was a huge inspiration in my early days, guiding me through my first 'real' wreck, the *Breda*, 20 years ago. He's now 82 and still regularly div-

ing – I'd like to go back to Teesside and dive with him again!

■ DREAM DIVE DESTINATION?

● The Great Lakes of Canada, to see some of the wooden wrecks preserved in a way that simply doesn't happen in a salt water environment.

■ BEST DIVE BOOK EVER READ?

● *The Other Titanic* by Simon Martin. Details the sheer audacity of a project that involved salvaging a White Star liner, that was thought to be undiveable at the time with nothing more than a rubber dinghy!

■ WHAT BUGS YOU MOST ABOUT DIVING?

● The way some divers seem to regard it as a competitive sport, when it just isn't.

■ HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE DIVING TO NON-DIVERS?

● A whole new world just waiting to be explored, where we are only every going to be privileged visitors!



Fiona takes a deco stop while diving the *Glen Isla*.
Image courtesy of Ian Potten