

University of London Sub-Aqua Club BSAC 0069

University of London Sub-Aqua Club Issue 4 - 30th August 2004



The Maine Event

Here is an account of one of the dives that I have done recently and is arguably one of the best dives of the year....The Maine. The Maine was a ship that sank in 1917 after being torpedoed off the Devonshire coastline. It was towed back to shore but sank off bolt head. We dived from the hardboat Samuel Irvin and launched from Salcombe. The Maine is about 4 miles from salcombe so is a relatively short boat ride.



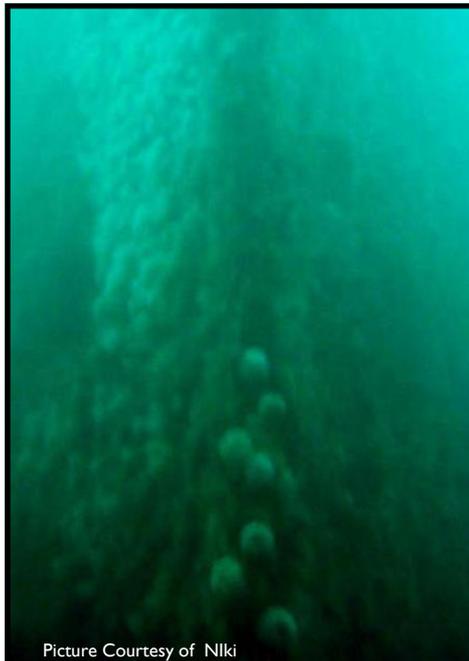
The day itself, an early start but we were rewarded with beautiful sunshine and flat calm seas. As we were diving from a hardboat everyone was in high spirits marvelling at the ease of kitting up, loading the boat and we revelled in the prospect of being in the pub for a late lunch. We dropped into water right on slack tide and rapidly descended down the vertical shot line. My first glimpse of the wreck was from 15metres, I couldn't believe what great visibility there was. My buddy Nikki and I were raring to go so wasted no time nipping round the side of one of the boilers and into the bowels of the wreck. The water seemed bright blue where the sun shone through gaps in the ceiling and there were fish all around us. It felt like an aquarium. We continued swimming toward the stern where it became dark and very still. I switched on my torch to have a closer look around me. After a short time we were faced with what an area that was pitch black. As I was ahead I switched off my torch to see if any natural light was shining through to indicate an exit. It was then that we saw a grid type of structure that stretched from floor to ceiling. We later found out that it was the side of the fuel tank and the bulk head that had only the struts remaining. This looked like great fun so we squeezed ourselves through a small gap on one side and continued our journey to the stern. We made our way through what may have been cabins and then suddenly we popped out the back of the wreck as the top of the stern overhung by quite some way.

As we looked down we could see something that seemed to be a wheel. This was the steering gear that has been used in place of a tiller. It was enormous. As I stood on one side with Nikki hovering below we exchanged vehement ok signals and I

couldn't resist a huge grin. Once I had dealt with my flooded mask we headed back up to the deck. In a relaxed manner we then started finning back up the wreck, over winches and other structures to capture our attention. There continued to be an enormous amount of fish life especially after we had swum back over the engines. We continued along the deck to the hold near the bow where we were unable to resist popping back down inside the wreck. Here it was pretty clear and again as we looked through gaps in the ceiling and the sides the sea looked clear and bright blue. Then we inspected the large anchor sitting directly behind the bow. Up we went back to deck level. Though time was ticking we allowed ourselves to lazily drift over and down the bow a short way. We exchanged up and ok signals and started moving slowly for the surface whilst facing the bow. It slowly faded away but was the perfect ending to a brilliant dive.

I think that though there are a number of 'best' things about this wreck the three top things are that it is a manageable size, as it is so nearly intact it is very easy to orientate oneself to and navigate around even for the less experienced sports divers. The penetration is also relatively 'safe' as there is normally a visible exit. Although the lure of the wreck is the contrast with that area near the stern which is so dark and still that it brings about a feeling of reverence. Finally the wreck is a good depth for sports divers and a not too far from shore which makes it a great dive for club trips.

Laura Williams



Picture Courtesy of Nikki

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Don't Miss....

Zoe Sharpe's Poetical tribute to a Dive on the Bretagne with Marcus Allen

Torbay page 4

Anthony's Pictures from Salcombe page 3

Member Updates:-

Congratulations to Marcus and Zoe on the birth of baby Arthur



Swanage 10th - 11th July 2004

Organiser: Miss Catherine Stanley

Overseen By Mr Sam Denby

Handfast Point @ 15m

Rather strong drift dive, which was rather challenging for those doing their sports diver assessments. Conditions challenging due to strong current. Loads of crabs and anemones, dogfish.

Betsy Anna @ 25m

Our adopted wreck. A real gem. '880 ton ship sank in 1926 after hitting a bit of Devon and now sits on a gravel sea bed in the centre of Poole bay at 24m. Upright but a bit battered the best bit are the bows and boilers.'

A plethora of marine life – congers, fishies, crabs. People continued the survey work from the previous Betsy Anna trip – sketches and noting features etc. Depth progression for the newly qualified sports divers!

Conditions a bit rough at end of dive due to wind picking up. This was expected due to local force 5's predicted on forecast. Beware.

General Bits...

Make sure tanks are full for the start of your trip or it could put you behind – as it did with us on Saturday morning!

With a long diving day it is worthwhile booking a restaurant in advance. We went to Antonio's at 37 Station Road (01929 422 138) and it was really lovely.

We left our shotline behind on the Betsy A due to entanglement. Try to ensure you have the correct amount of line / a lifting bag and a back up plan to retrieve it! (It will be replaced!).

Littlehampton 7th - 8th August 2004

Organiser: Miss Claire Halligan

Overseen By Miss Laura Williams

On the weekend of the 7th and 8th of August 13 intrepid divers met a Chiswick to go to Littlehampton for a weekends diving. I think that we had some of the worst luck ever experienced on a club weekend! We met at the boathouse and when the marshalling bag arrived we opened up the garage, it looked strangely empty but as it was still very early I didn't really pay much attention. As the first sports divers arrived I instructed them to get the kit they needed out of the garage and to put it in their kit bags. Then we realise that there was no Club reg box tucked into the back of the garage. "Where on earth were they and now we were looking where were the lions share of the cylinders?" One of the waiting divers said brightly oh, there were try dives this week they'll be in ULU. With no way of getting the kit we needed out of the locked cage in the middle of London my heart sank. So we had a rummage and discovered a couple of faulty regs that needed no more than a new O ring and new port to make them serviceable again. As a couple of divers also had spare regs this meant that we would only be down two and as two divers had their own tanks we just had enough. Phew!

We got down to Littlehampton with the knowledge that it was going to be a trek to the dives we wanted. That meant an early morning start and the need for good weather. So the morning came. Regs were fiddled about with we realised that we had no pump for Hippo so one was purchased. The rib didn't have enough fuel so that needed to go to the petrol station. Finally everyone was ready, the boats were in the water and we were off. As we were almost on slack water we abandoned our search for the wreck of the Northcoates and dived on the Shirala instead that had GPS marks meaning we could put divers on the wreck immediately. Unfortunately the last divers in a short time on the wreck and more time spent doing a drift dive. Whilst they were down conditions worsened and a heavy fog came down like a blanket. It was quite a relief when we all emerged blinking in the bright light and shaking off the chill of the damp air.

Though the marshal had contacted the air shop to check on the time it took for fills and to inform them of the time we would be needing ours it still did not speed filling and the 10 tanks we needed took over 2 hours to be refilled. The decision was to do a 'proper' dive the following day. Unfortunately the wind had picked up and we could not do this so instead we fell back onto plan B diving from a little further down the coast. However the slip was not suitable for the rib. Onto plan C. We would launch down the tiny slip and the rib would meet us from Littlehampton. We carted all the kit, boats and engines down Worthing beach as the tide went out further and further out. It was no small feat. Meanwhile no rib had shown and eventually the boats returned. The rib was broken, the throttle had snapped off. So now onto plan D. There would no longer be two dives possible so we would wave dive in Hippo to a shallow wreck nearby. So our determination to dive was finally satisfied and most people seemed to enjoy a drift at about 10 metres there seemed to be plenty of life with cuttlefish and other life being spotted.

Notes for further trips. Might be a good idea for a laminated card to be mounted on the wall of the garage as a reminder of what boat kit we need and other details to be considered. Next year perhaps we should run the boats from empty to empty. Then we would all know that they needed filling. Also it has been suggested that the petrol may be being filched out of the ribs, so this would also be prevented. I would suggest that Littlehampton should be done with 2 ribs or as a hardboat dive. There is quite a distance to any of the wrecks and many are quite deep therefore it needs to be a sports diver and above dive or a dive leader trip. As Littlehampton is so close to London it would be well worth having more trips to this part of the country in the future. Beware future marshals there are very few facilities in the area so 2 tanks for everyone is essential and the trip needs to be self sufficient. Still many congratulations to Claire who managed very well despite some serious setbacks!



Salcombe 24th - 25th July 2004

Organiser:

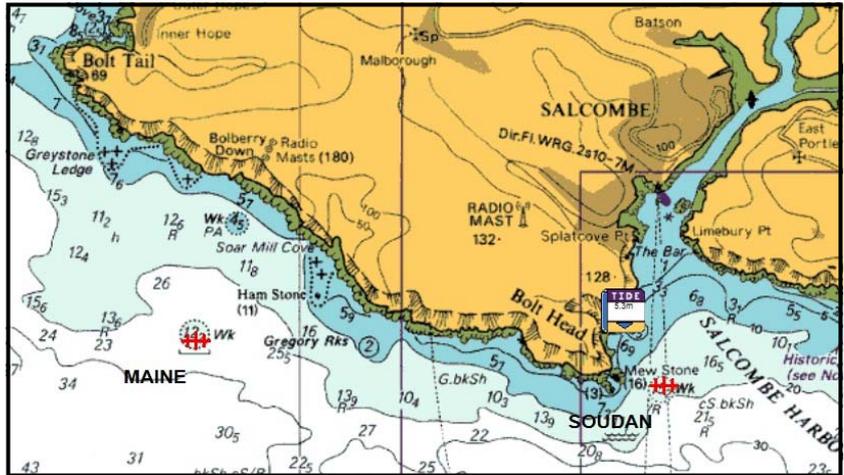
Mr Nicholas John (Wyclef)

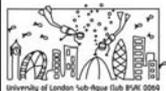
Overseen By

Miss Laura Williams

Well I think we will let the pictures speak for themselves for this weekend.....

Pictures Courtesy of Anthony (Left to Right)
Tom Pot Blenny, Bloody Henry, Sea Squirts,
Devonshire Cup Coral





Torbay 28th - 30th August 2004

Organiser: Miss Zoe Sharpe

Overseen By Miss Michelle Kim

Dive Site: THE BRETAGNE
Buddy: Marcus Allen

A favourite with divers in East Devon
A signature wreck off this stunning coast
Plenty to explore – a Wreckie's heaven,
Accessible and handy depths to boast

A descent to eighteen metres – that's plenty
BUT Marcus' torch sulk and decides to strike
We rely on my Kowalski 620
And I lead the way around this dark site

The dive plan was extremely aerobic
Covering hundreds of feet – bow to stern
No time for any exercise phobic
We had serious calories to burn!

Our arrival at the stern end was quick
Then, straight on down to inspect the rudder
Turned slightly to port, anenomes thick
Continuing down into the gloom ... shudder ...

Our gradual descent revealed a prop
Still in place but with two damaged blades
Thirty metres ... furthest from the sea's top
Slowly we ascend and the image fades

Back on deck, we are on our way again
Passing a spare prop fixed firmly in place
Inspecting collision damage – the Bretagne's pain
And entering holds with effortless grace!

Visibility was not on our side
Engine room studies took place from above
Over ventilation hatches at a glide
Now my drysuit snugly fits like a glove!

A glancing look through the wide and dark hole
Where the proud standing funnel once had stood
Needing burrowing techniques of a mole
For internal boiler room views any good

On we went in the bow's end direction
I was drawn into a front hold with appeal
Starting as an uneventful inspection
Til I spotted a free swimming conger eel

Shock over and we are back on our way
Spotting winches and deck houses en route
And as much as we would both like to stay
Cold sets in ... it really is time to shoot

Preparing for ascent, up goes the blob
Then starts my comic feet first hiatus
After piss takes, Marcus performs his job
Grabs me and lives up to his NI status!

By Zoë Sharpe

Perrone

This should be dived on slacks. We actually managed this although the second boat wave did catch the end of slacks. They did not report too much current though. Due to the crazy windy weather we had in the build up to this weekend, the visibility all weekend wasn't great which was a shame. It's not great with perfect weather! It was pretty dark and this wreck is pretty big! Once orientated this steamer wreck was fantastic. Watch out for the fishing nets/wire ...

Orestone

I didn't personally get to do this dive (thanks Sam!!!) – however, there is a hole all the way through the Orestone which can be dived through (and one buddy pair did).

The waves and current picked up just after we dropped the divers so one of the pairs experienced quite a quick drift dive. Boat cover and SMBs in this case were very important. Ideally this should be dived on slacks.

Anyway, this dive site is a useful second dive with lots of life, gullies and little caves ... shame I didn't get to see it!!

Dudley Rose

A relatively unknown wreck for ULSAC – it has been dived before but not recently and we wanted to add this to our repertoire for this area. A mixed report of an awesome dive and totally shocking! A couple of buddy pairs made it on to the wreck and the reports back were very positive. However, one buddy pair had an issue with kit at the top of the shot line and subsequent tension on the shot resulted in other pairs not getting on the wreck.

The importance of the shot line and not yanking on it was demonstrated when all divers reached the bottom!! It was absolutely pitch black – if you didn't literally land on the wreck there was pretty much no chance of finding it – even with a compass bearing (couldn't bloody see the compass!!). Torches were essential. Needless to say Michelle and I dropped to 40m, found nothing but a bouncing shot line, searched for the wreck for a bit and then came up. A bit disappointing personally but successful as an excursion for another ULSAC wreck.



Dates for Your Diary

September 2004						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

October 2004						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

November 2004						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Social Events for Your Calendar

- 1st & 2nd Oct *Fresher Fair*

Key

-  Special events
-  Fundraising Events
-  Dive Trips

Upcoming Diving Trips for Your Calendar

- 3rd -19th Sept Summer Trip : South of France
Jimmy and Catherine
- 25th - 25th Sept Littlehampton

Training

See Dive Leader training feature below to Bewl Water

Coming Soon:-

Boat Handling Course

Oxygen Administration

Keep your eyes peeled to the website and the newsletter for more information

Dive Leader Training at Bewl Water 15th August 2004

Organiser: Mr Jimmy Cooke

Overseen By Mr Sam Denby and Mr Mark Bell

Bewl water is located in just outside the village of Lamberhurst, close to Tunbridge Wells, and is only 1 1/2 hours from Chiswick.

Essentially a Bewl water is a lake devoted to Sailing and fishing, but by prior arrangement will accommodate divers. With a supposed maximum depth of 15 metres, it should be ideal for Dive leader training purposes.

A full set of Bewl Water regulations can be obtained from the very helpful Wendy Page on 01892 890661.

Summary of regulations: You need boat cover (max 40 HP), must have proof of Dive Leader qualification, and Cox'n must have minimum of a BSAC boat handling course, diving by prior arrangement only.

Unfortunately Bewl water was devoid of good visibility the day we went, we were supposed to dive by the dam, but all the fishermen were over there, but I doubt the viz would be much better.

Despite the 40HP rule for maximum boat engine size and a 'sensible speed limit' there were other larger and more powerful boats on the water, so it may be possible to run a boat handling course there.

Excellent facilities on site, include 'wet' changing area and toilets so no need to get out of suits unless you want to check out the Café (Bacon Sandwiches were good)



U.L.S.A.C.

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Picture Courtesy of Marcus Allen @2001

ULSAC's Summer Trip to The South of France

4-19th September 2004

A Preview...

(more info check out www.ulsac.net)

The trip has been planned for two weeks of diving. We shall be flying, with transfers on buses and general transport and arrangement of kit etc to dive sites. The trip will be booked as such. For those of you who want to come along but cannot commit to the two weeks you will need to let us know the days you would like to dive and we will tell you if this is possible. It will obviously be up to you to book your individual travel arrangements to the diving location. Members coming for a few days will be responsible for their own travel costs and only will be charged a fair pro-rata rate (to be determined), which will be dependent upon number of dives and boat usage, food etc.

Date: **Friday 3rd - Sunday 19th September.** (Start and finish date are not set in stone yet and may move by 2 days either way)

Location: **Week one near Marseille, week two Le Lavandou** this is currently dependent on accommodation availability.

Accommodation: Youth hostel depending on availability (Near Marseille) and camping (Le Lavandou)

Highlights:-Nature reserve scenics (various) and the wreck of Chaouen, Dalton, Liban, San Domenico, Donator (Prosper Schiaffino), Espignole, Prophete, Ramon and possily Rubis (possible day trip)

Best Buddy Project 2004

Founded two years ago, the Best Buddy Project aims to give kids who might be in a vulnerable position an opportunity to see a bigger picture. By experiencing two risk activities that necessitate dependency on other people, it is hoped they take from the project, 'trust'.

The two activities are arranged in conjunction with the London Fire Brigade and the British Sub Aqua Club. Activities with the Fire Brigade involve adventurous rescue situations from buildings specially designed for fireman training.

Taking anyone into the water with scuba gear for the first time requires considerable training and a large amount of scuba equipment was required. This year, the Walthamstow Forest BSAC branch requested assistance from other clubs in order to run the event. The University of London Sub Aqua Club was more than happy to oblige, providing both nationally qualified instructors and much of the scuba gear.

The kids were very well behaved, and learned snorkelling, lifesaving techniques and basic scuba skills. Having taught many UL students to scuba dive, the ULSAC instructors were pleasantly surprised at how rapidly the children learned to become neutrally buoyant, clear their regulators, remove water from their masks and do forward rolls. The underwater toys provided by members of ULSAC also proved very popular and maintained high levels of interest.

Scored out of 10 for enjoyment and interest by the kids and their care workers, the scuba diving event received an average score of 10.0.

Our collaboration with the Walthamstow Forest branch, and help from a number of other London branches, was extremely successful and we will continue to support the scheme next year.

It is hoped that next summer, it might be possible for the University of London Union 'Sports and Societies' to run another community event, in order to provide a challenge to underprivileged inner city kids, and show them some of the opportunities that exist that they may not have previously thought about.

Report by Mr Jimmy Cooke