

ULSAC Trip Report Form

Please include on this form any details you think will help organise another trip to this area. Please include details of any problems encountered, or any particularly good things/places in the area, such as good or awful restaurants and pubs.

Logistics

Date	9-16 August 2008	Springs <input type="checkbox"/> Neaps <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Venue	Sound of Mull	
Manager	Anjali Shah	
Overseer	Martin Greaves	
Number of People	8	
List of attendees with Diver Grade in brackets (e.g SD, DL etc)	Anjali Shah (DL)	Susie Fisher (DL)
	Martin Greaves (AD)	Steve Salvatore (SD)
	Michelle Kim (AD)	Dave Pearce (SD)
	Ali Gaudion (SD)	Craig Combe (SD)
Accommodation	Tobermory Youth Hostel Pink painted building on waterfront in centre of village. 5 doors down from the Mishnish!!	
Address	Main Street Tobermory Isle of Mull PA75 6NU	
Telephone No.	Scottish Youth Hostel Association: 01786 891 400 Tobermory Youth Hostel: 01688 302 481 (call after 5pm)	
Cost per night/per tent/per person or as appropriate	£96 per person for 7 nights	
Notes	2 single-sex rooms on different floors, which had to be shared with others because the hostel was full. 12 hobs, a normal sized oven, fridge and fully stocked kitchen. Drying room, washing machine and dryer. Friendly staff	
Ferry	Caledonina MacBrayne 08000 66 5000 / 01688 302 017 Cost £297.50 for van, MPV, trailer and 7 people return Need vehicle/trailer lengths and registration numbers for booking.	
Launch Site (inc. cost)	Tobermory harbour or Craignure Tobermory harbour master – Jim 07917 832497 – very helpful	
Coastguard	Clyde Coastguard: 01475 729 988 Stornaway Coastguard: 01851 702 013/4	
Nearest chamber	Dunstaffnage Hyperbaric Unit, Oban 01631 559 000 The Underwater Centre, Fort William 01397 703 786	
Air Shop	Seafare – at Aug. 2008 was not providing clean air and no nitrox. However they were in the process of moving to new premises in the new harbourmaster's building with this capability. 01688 302 277	
Van Hire (inc. notes, did you breakdown, AA cover, tow bar etc.)	H & H van hire Kentish town 020 7916 6616 (£339.91 for 9 days – had to book for the full weekend. Pick up on Friday night 4-5pm and return by 9am Monday) The short-wheeled based transit van as not required to tow. ULU MPV - £15 per day and 20 pence per mile	

Dives

Dives 1, 4 and 5	
Site:	Calve Island (one dive named Suicidal Urchin)
Max depth:	+50 metres
GPS Marks:	56 37 50N 06 02 90W (off chart and WGS84)
Website info:	http://www.divernet.com/cgi-bin/articles.pl?id=3724&sc=7&ac=d
Brief description:	<p>Tides – usually slight, but everyone should have an SMB.</p> <p>Location – start the dive around the point where the sheer cliff above land meets the grass to its left, and then head left.</p> <p>A lovely scenic dive on the northwest of Calve Island, just outside Tobermory Bay at the northern entrance to the Sound. The site drops to more than 50m, with chimneys, gulleys and vertical cracks covered in life. There are good quality sponges, soft corals, sea squirts and starfish. A good place for a warm up dive with great visibility.</p>

Dive 2	
Site:	The Pelican
Max depth:	23 metres
GPS Marks:	56 36.8993N 06 02.4930W (WGS84)
Website info:	www.lochlinedivecentre.co.uk/ Look for the Sound of Mull Remote Sensing Project
Brief description:	<p>Tides – not subject to currents, seldom undiveable.</p> <p>Location – face the house on Calve Island. The wreck is to the right by about 10-15 metres.</p> <p>The Pelican was a coal-hulk that sank just off Calve Island. She was one of the first steel ships and has a cutter-style bow. The area on this side of Pelican island is very silty. The wall next to the Pelican is quite nice and it's quite impressive to drop off the cliff and see the wreck looming out. We were all impressed with the size of this wreck given that many others had not found her.</p>

Dives 3 & 11	
Site:	Rondo
Max depth:	50 metres
GPS marks:	56 32.300N 05 54.766W (GPS) 56 32.295N 05 54.758W (GPS)
Website info:	http://www.divernet.com/cgi-bin/articles.pl?id=1724&sc=1026&ac=d Also some nice footage on Youtube
Brief description	<p>Tides: slack is 1 hour before HW/LW Oban. Must dive on slack.</p> <p>Location: marked by a white buoy attached to her uppermost stern, off the islet of Dearg Sgeir. East of the small white lighthouse on the rock.</p> <p>The Rondo was a dry cargo ship, weighing 2363 tonnes and was launched in 1917. She was lost in 1935 after breaking her anchorage in a fierce storm. She ran aground on the islet of Dearg Sgeir, and after a salvage attempt, slipped down the cliff, coming to rest almost vertically – the bows are in 50 metres of water while the stern is just a few metres from the surface! Only the hull remains, along with various debris, but the wreckage is rich with colourful anemones and fish. There are swim throughs between the cliff and wreck at 25m and 35m. Heading down to about 41m, the wreck levels out and there's a bit of a swim along to the bows which are roughly in 48m. It's a spectacular dive!</p>

Dives 6, 7 and 8	
Site:	Hispania
Max depth:	26 metres
GPS Marks:	56 34.917N 05 59.200W (GPS) 56 34.921N 05 59.204W (Bow) 56 34.949N 05 59.212W (Stern)
Website info:	http://www.divernet.com/cgi-bin/articles.pl?id=2108&sc=0&ac=d
Brief description:	Three superb dives on our favourite Mull wreck, which is covered in multi-coloured soft corals, wrasse, conger eels, lionsmane jellyfish etc. The whole wreck can be covered in one dive, but there's plenty of bonus details to be seen when exploring slowly. Lots of rummaging was had around the whole wreck, amongst the holds and apartments etc. On the surface dolphins, an otter and porpoises were seen.

Dive 9	
Site:	Lochaline West Pier
Max depth:	+80 metres
GPS Marks:	56 31 95N 05 47 09W
Brief description:	<p>http://www.divernet.com/cgi-bin/articles.pl?id=3724&sc=1030&ac=d</p> <p>Tides: Must dive on slack</p> <p>Location: We launched from the ferry slip at Fishnish and went to Lochaline West Pier. Fishnish: 56 51 480N 05 80 995W</p> <p>Pretty wall dive with lots of scenic life.</p> <p>Dives from in front of the white beach are recommended by Lochaline Dive Centre. Best to avoid diving by the Pier when there's logs/workmen on it.</p> <p>We went to Lochaline for lunch and air fills – nice café. Give Lochaline Dive Centre (01967 421627) a call and they will pick up your cylinders for filling. It is a walk up a long steep hill otherwise! Lochaline: 56 53 739N 05 77 53W</p>

Dive 10	
Site:	Ardtornish Bay, Lochaline
Max depth:	21 metres
GPS Marks:	
Brief description:	<p>Tides: interesting tidal patterns in this bay, which led to a fun drift dive</p> <p>Location: south of Ardtornish Point</p> <p>So much fun to be had on a scallop-picking dive, especially when they are eaten for dinner. Amazing amount of sea bed life with crustaceans, dog fish, gurnards</p> <p>See the article below for more details -</p> <p>A Mull Hypothesis: ULSAC unscientifically tests diver-caught scallops.</p>

Dive 12	
Site:	The Shuna
Max depth:	35 metres
GPS Marks:	56 33.233N, 05 54.866W
Website info:	http://www.divernet.com/cgi-bin/articles.pl?id=1680&sc=1026&ac=d
Brief description:	<p>Tides: non-tidal</p> <p>Location: The Shuna is buoyed and is located in a bay that is less than 200 metres from shore, and 300m SE of a fish farm.</p> <p>The wreck lies virtually intact, flat on the silty seabed. A very nice rummage dive, especially when scallop shells are gently falling around you. A lovely dive to end the trip.</p>

General Details
<p>A fantastic holiday.</p> <p>Highlights: mirror-glass seas for the whole week; dolphin, seal and porpoise-sightings on a daily basis; diver-picked scallops for dinner; synchronised reverse-entries; Weetacakes; no tantrums; onboard facilities; friendly locals; delicious food; night-swimming; Haribo; Viking warriors; great wreck and scenic diving; pancakes for breakfast; lots of boat-handling training; venison burgers at Lochaline; testing Scoundrel's speed limit down the Sound of Mull; buoy-surfing; drinking local whisky whilst playing killer darts in the Mishnish; and many more.</p> <p>We will return.....</p>

Tales of the Mull Summer Trip

Reverse entries or how to enter the boat with minimal effort by Susie Fisher

After a while the old trick of kicking your fins frantically whilst heaving yourself up over the side of the boat gets a bit tiring. In Mull, all trip members perfected a new and far superior entry technique known as the reverse entry.

By the end of the trip we had four divers at once reversing into the boat, a Mexican wave of divers and every pair synchronising their reverse entries post dive.

The reverse entry involves turning away from the boat and holding the ropes with both hands. You then swing your head under the boat and press your face against the Hull (mask recommended), bringing your knees up to your chest you swing your legs up and over the boat. Finally your arms straighten and you land with your feet on the ground standing up in the boat, perfect. At least that is the theory!

In reality there are two moments in this technique when you think you might drown, one when your face is pushed against the black hull and all you can see and hear is the boat, and secondly when you have swung your legs over into the boat but haven't got the strength to haul yourself the last step. This results in the seesaw where you remain face down in the water unable to move until some kind soul tips you up the right way up.

Once you learn to enjoy the thrill of these moments however, the reverse entry has a lot to offer! Indeed so much so that there are calls (not many but some!) for this to replace the old technique taught at Easter Training. Reverse entries for all!

A Mull Hypothesis: ULSAC unscientifically tests diver-caught scallops by Steve Salvatore

The sound of Mull is an area well known to divers for scallops, tales of yore tell of rich sea beds full of life, where a diver can collect his weight in scallops yet hardly make a dent in the huge populations. Upon hearing this, I thought; "Pah! 50 years ago maybe, but not today, they've probably been dived to death by now." Little was I to know that the legends were true...

Most scallops are caught using bottom trawling gear, basically a plough attached to a net, which rakes up the seabed, catching anything big enough to get caught in the net including; scallops, starfish, crabs, lobsters, fish, urchins, algae and more often than not, rocks. This approach to scalloping has destroyed huge tracts of seabed in the UK, leaving it looking not unlike a ploughed field. This is not good news for sea bed ecology, and certainly not good news for us divers, who like to see life on the bottom now and then. However, there has

recently been a resurgence in diver caught scallops in response to a growing demand for food that doesn't require the destruction of entire ecosystems to fill you up

.So, ULSAC being ULSAC, we decided to have a go ourselves

We travelled far and wide, braving the wrath of Scottish lumberjacks and hunting down venison burgers in the burger bar of destiny. Finally we consulted the oracle of the Lochaline dive shop, who told us of a place where more scallops than we could ever dream of could be found. So after another burger, an ice cream, and an impromptu lesson in inverted boat entrances from Martin, we set sail for the legendary Ardtornish Bay. Upon arrival the current was tested using an innovative 'plastic bottle neutral' method for determining current, which involved losing said bottle and sending a Dave ashore to find another on the drift line. Satisfied that the current was in our favour, the brave and fearless scallop divers of ULSAC dropped in.

On the bottom, we encountered a shellfish paradise, I saw more crustaceans in one dive than I have seen in my entire life, and I wasn't even looking! Not to be outdone though, the scallops seemed to jump out of the silt as you swam past (or at least after you'd made a grab for them). Watching Michelle trying to grab the first scallop had me in stitches, as the beast danced out of her grip like a possessed castanet. I soon learned my lesson when the next scallop did the same to me. We let the current carry us across the crabscape, lunging for scallops along the way. During our hunt we saw no less than three dogfish, a gurnard, and some bizarre mating dances from the crabs. By the end of the dive we had scallop collecting down to a fine art and a very full goody bag, it was time to ascend. Unfortunately for Michelle the full bag of scallops had added about 6 kilos to her weight and she found herself anchored to the seabed, her drysuit unable to contain enough air to give her neutral buoyancy. Thankfully, Michelle dives with an 80lb OMS wing, which after a considerable squirt of air got her off the sea bed and onto the ascent.

Back on the surface, our rather large catch was sorted and the smallest scallops returned to the sea before we headed for home. On land, we soon realised that despite our best efforts, we still had too many scallops, so twenty scallops were gifted to Clidive, another club diving Mull at the same time as us. In return we were gifted with two bottles of wine, does this count as diving for reward?

In the kitchen, a small production line was set up, for the next hour six divers prised the molluscs from their shells, under the tutelage of two wisened Advanced (scallop) Divers. I was particularly amused by the shrieks that issued from our hardened divers when the dying scallops twitched in their hands as they were being cleaned...

In the end we filled a large baking tray with some of the largest most succulent scallops that I have ever seen.

Traditional advice for cooking scallops is to fry them lightly on each side for no longer than a few minutes; however tradition failed to take into account the sheer size of our scallops. Up to ten minutes were needed to cook some of our largest scallops. Our master chef, Martin, was surprised by this, and he has been cooking scallops since he was a wee lad.

So we've followed the epic journey from the sea bed to the table, but what of those last few inches to the mouth? These scallops were heavenly, unlike anything I've ever eaten. The muscle was soft and delicate, each morsel almost melted on the tongue, tantalising my tastebuds with the subtle flavours imparted by the master chef. They were deliciously moreish, until you'd had about five, at which point you were full up. At this time, a competition started over who could eat the most scallops, which saw Susie having to take a lie down after finishing.

The scallops were planned as part of a tapas style first course, augmented with such delights as jacket wedges, battered courgettes and the infamous weetacakes. The starter was meant to be followed by a vegetarian moussakka as the main course and pancakes for dessert. Shamefully, we couldn't get past the starters, thanks to the sheer volume of scallops, the moussakka was had the next day, and the pancakes were had for breakfast (thanks Dave).

The idea of catching my own dinner has always appealed to me, and having now tried it, I can confirm that it does taste all the better for the effort I put into it. A scallop starter in one of the Tobermory restaurants cost more than £14 per person. Our scallop starter cost pennies per person and was oh so much sweeter for it.

Please return completed forms to the Diving Officer asap. Thanks!