

CamBSAC



CamBSAC 240 Newsletter

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Well another diving season is looming large on the horizon and looks like we have quite a few plans afoot for dive trips (see page 8). A new trainee group started training on the 17th Feb, some are now fully fledged Ocean Divers and the rest are all well on there way to becoming divers. For a full list of qualifications achieved since the last publication see the Honour Role on page 7

POOL

As of the 3rd February the now infamous pool reopened among sighs of relief and disbelief from regular members. The pool is the same as ever apart from a lick of paint and a heating system that works!!!! However the old building has been incased in a spanking new sports centre with all mod cons. This has given us lovely clean changing rooms with hot showers and clean loos. However the changing room floors are now lethally slippery. The other change to the pool running is that we now have to provide a lifeguard (to save the club £10 per session). This means

that one member, sports diver or above, now has to be on the pool side modeling the very fetching red t-shirt with LIFEGUARD on the back (little red Speedos are optional) and has to carry the whistle.

Sam Wenham

A View from the Outside – a Story about Becoming a New Member.

Scuba Diving is always something that has interested me, so when I moved to Cambridge last summer I decided that joining a Sub-Aqua club would be a good way to meet some new people. But how does one find such a club in a new city, well when you work at a swimming pool its not too difficult.

After being introduced to Neil and Sam at Chesterton Sports Centre (when they were pleading for information about when the pool would open) I was told to meet at the Boathouse on the next Thursday to find out about the club. I made my way to Micham's corner feeling apprehensive and nervous and not quite knowing where I was going. As soon as I arrived my nerves were put at ease as I was welcomed by a friendly group of people, full of information and stories to wet my appetite.

I think I was rather unfortunate to join the club before Chesterton pool was up and running as I was subjected to Saturday morning training sessions at the Leys school where things always seemed to be a bit of a rush. But the dedication of the members to give up their Saturdays to help with training was very commendable, something I think we can all appreciate, and it was not long before our group had completed all the relevant sections.

The thing that has always interested me about a club environment is the way that people from all different walks of life and of all ages can meet and share a common interest and the Dive Club is no exception. I have made numerous friends as well as learning a skill that I hope to enjoy for many years to come. Thank you to everyone in the Club who has made me feel so welcome, I hope I can continue to do the same for new members in the future.

Cathy Fells

Dive Tobago

The vexing question was ‘where do two divers go to celebrate 25 years of wedded bliss?’ Many, varied options were considered – I drew the line at spending our anniversary in a roof tent on a Land Rover somewhere in Mozambique so we finally decided to return to Tobago.

R & Sea Divers, based at Crown Point are a very friendly organisation who we had dived with the previous year. An e-mail to Wendy assured us that there was space on the boats but hotel rooms were in short supply – two days later we had confirmation of a poolside cabaña at a small hotel where the dive centre had it’s classroom and office.

Wendy, John, Tracy and the gang at R & Sea Divers go out of their way to make your diving as relaxed as possible. They will collect you from your hotel and return you there later in the day after diving is over. Meanwhile, Jackie or Peas, the dive masters will have everything ready for you at the dive hut and Ricky will be waiting for you on the boat. Bottles of chilled water are provided on the boat between dives.

Diving is mainly on the Atlantic side of the island where there are several different reefs. My personal favourite is Divers Dream and it does what it says on the tin! Eagle rays greeted us as we began the dive,

huge shoals of fish too numerous to start to name, the occasional shark snoozing under an overhang, and of course the obligatory turtle or two posing for photos.

We decided to head to the other end of the island for a day to see what is reputed to be the biggest brain coral in the world. It’s a beautiful drive but beware of the fact that all Tobagan drivers use hand signals for a variety of reasons, sometimes to let you know what they are doing, sometimes to acknowledge a friend and sometime to emphasise a point in the animated conversation the driver is having with his passenger! We arrive unscathed in Speyside to meet up with Peas and to collect our boat and skipper, we were the only two



Jackie, Tony and Ricky

diving with R & Sea in Speyside that day so we had the boat to ourselves. It was amazing to see how much devastation the hurricane of the previous year had wrought on the reefs. However, it was reassuring to see that nature is already effecting some repairs.



Friday evening Wendy and John (Tracy had left for the UK on the same day that we arrived) decided that a few beers / rum punches were in order so off we went to a beach side bar for fish and chips – fried flying fish is yummy! I think we realised that it was time to leave when even the band had packed up and gone home... good job that we had decided to have the next day off diving!

We hired a jeep, the roads have suffered from the storms, so a car is a bit too low slung. After two dives which were usually over by lunchtime, we stopped up the road for Roti or crab ‘n’ dumplings or some similar, low carb, healthy lunch, and then headed off to find a beach to snooze for the afternoon.

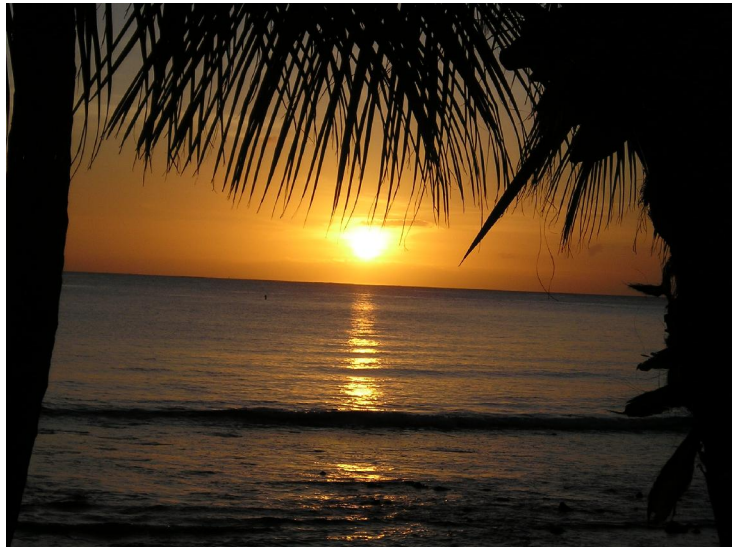
Dive Tobago

The beaches on Tobago are amazing and often almost deserted.

During the day food is readily available at many of the roadside huts. It is very cheap (£2.50 - £5.00) and plentiful. Eating out in the evening is not something that the Tobagans do so it is more geared for the tourists. I don't recommend any of the 'posh' restaurants, they are over priced and the service is invariably poor, stick with the mid range and you will enjoy local fish dishes, callaloo soup, and other Cajun delights.

All too quickly our holiday was over, we dived the Dream on our anniversary and then shared a

couple of bottles of champagne with our dive buddies, the weather was perfect, the sea was blue, what more could one ask at the beginning of March? (our wedding day was wet and cold!)



R & Sea Divers can be found at: <http://www.rseadivers.com/>

Suzie Wenham

Seal Release

I was lucky enough to be able to establish links with Hunstanton Sea Life Sanctuary a few years ago when I asked about diving in their shark tank just when they happened to be looking for someone.

Building on that I attended a British Divers Marine Life Rescue course to become a marine mammal medic. Having done this I was able to gain some hands on experience working at the centre with seals and going out on seal releases from there. Thus, when during a social visit to Hunstanton, Kieran mentioned he was stuck for boats to use for a seal release I was able to set things in motion for Cambsac's first direct involvement with this.

It came to pass on the day before Easter Sunday, 11 members congregated at the Centre at the un-holly hour of 8am with both boats ready to receive seals. The bottle rack had temporarily been removed from Chunderbird to make more seal space. Anglia Television had also turned up to film the whole event for their "Country Days" series.

Capturing the seals involves dropping a stretcher tied at one end over the seal then closing the other ends of the stretcher around the seal. One of the seals still needed tagging so I had the interesting experience of pinning it down while this was done. An experience not unlike riding a horse but without any risk of falling! The seals were then weighed. Each weighing in at about 50kg. Five seals in stretchers were then passed up to other members to be carried round to the boats parked along side the Centre.

The slip at Hunstanton is free but parking at the slip is charged at £60 per day! Needless to say after launching, the cars and trailers were returned to the Centre which is just a short walk away. All aboard and a quick radio check and we were off. The Anglia Television man was busy making TV stars of us all and the club boats, while the coxes were busy watching the sounder and trying not to hit the water skier. Hunstanton, along with the rest of The Wash, is not an easy spot to navigate a boat at the best of times. Sandbanks abound and with the seals needing to be released close to low water and low water in the middle of the day meaning a spring tide we were guaranteed an eventful trip!

Seal Release Cont

It wasn't long before the shallow alarm was buzzing away and the boats came to a halt. At this point we could see quite a few wild seals gathering in the water around us but this was not a good place to stop with the tide still ebbing away fast. We didn't fancy spending the next three hours sat on the sand bank, so we headed for the nearby channel. This was the main channel up the river Great Ouse to King's Lynn so we were guaranteed enough water to float the boat in for now. Our intended destination was Seal Sand. As the name suggests this is normally a good spot to find seals. We wanted to release our seals as close to wild colony as possible. Some distance down the channel however and there wasn't a seal in sight. When we could see King's Lynn starting to appear through the thickening mist we decided perhaps we should be turning round and looking for seals on the other side of the channel.

After a few false alarms from flocks of birds we eventually found a couple of young wild seals hauled out near a channel marker buoy. Considering options we decided this would have to do so anchors were deployed and the seals unloaded.

The seal release is always a great moment. Far from making a sudden dash for the water, the seals wonder about, sniffing at people's feet like puppies. Probably expecting to be fed they were eventually persuaded into the water by following us. Cormac tried giving them lessons in floating on your back but they didn't seem very impressed. John Schneider handed out "Seal bars", an appropriate snack for the moment. The Anglia Television guy interviewed Tina from the Sea Life Sanctuary while the seals swam back and forth trying to make sure they were in shot.

I wasn't long before the tide had ebbed to the point where Chunderbird was sitting on mud and a hasty retreat was in order. As we left we could see the seals with their big "puppy dog" eyes that said, "Don't leave us! When do we get fed?". It is known from tagging that the seals do cope with being re-released in this way but it's still a worrying time for both seals and people when they are left to fend for themselves.

Navigating back up the channel on the sounder, Chunderbird was having some problems with the throttle. At least we didn't have far to go which was a relief since we couldn't do more than 10 knots. Ironically a couple of miles back down the channel and we came across a huge seal colony. Many of the seals bolted into the water where they felt safer and kept a close eye on these strange people things!

Careful use of GPS, Chart and sounder were needed to get up back towards Hunstanton. That and dodging the odd shrimping boat that loomed out of the mist at us. By the time we got back to close to Hunstanton it was nearly low water. We needed a devious route around a sand bank, inching through the gloom of the fog. At one point Camdiver went aground and the cameraman filmed Phil walking about in knee deep water trying to find somewhere deep enough to float the boat in.

Eventually what was either the shore or yet another sandbank came in sight. Then we saw some people walking about so John Rogers decided to jump out and ask them where we were! It seemed easier than getting the chart out yet again though how embarrassing when the fog lifted and we were on Hunstanton Beach right opposite the pier! After four hours at sea with an average depth of about 1m under the boat we were back.

Recovering Chunderbird proved interesting since the winch handle had gone missing. A combination of reversing the trailer towards the boat and a bit of brute shoving did the trick. We all then regrouped at the Centre for much needed cups of tea. I have to say, the seal pool at the Centre looks a much more inviting place to live than a sandbank out in The Wash but then I'm not a seal so what would I know?

Simon Parker

Mucking Around on Boats

This report on the boat-handling day could be really short and succinct by just saying that all those who did not go missed out on a really fun and informative day, but I thought it best to rub it in by giving you the details. Sunday March 13th started bright and sunny as Rob Clarkeson and myself set off to meet up with the other club members on the appointed hour at Levington Marina near Felixstowe.

Of course we were late so we raced along to minimise the telling off. We arrived only ten minutes late so only a mild rebuke was expected but to our surprise we could not find anyone to berate us. Lines of disappointment etched our faces. Were we at the right marina? Was this even the right day? Was it all a cruel hoax? As the marina is quite large we drove around several times before we went into the shop to ask where some one might launch a rib. The ramp was inspected but no ribs or suspicious looking BSAC types could be seen. Time for a phone call that revealed that club ribs were approaching fast after being held up by mechanical difficulties.

On the arrival of the boats we were divided up into Team Chunderbird and Team Camdiver. The novices were shown how to prepare the ribs for sea and launch them. Once these necessary technicalities were out of the way we could get down the real fun of the day racing around in the boats! Team Camdiver which included me, headed out to the main estuary leaving a ball of foaming water called Chunderbird racing up and down the water skiing area. We practiced more skilful things like coming along side disused light ships and buoys.

Unfortunately, this was interrupted this at regular intervals by the extremely clumsy and unlucky Geoff falling overboard and requiring rescue. He usually did this at the most awkward time when we were under maximum power. The truth is that Neil was repeatedly ejecting him overboard as he had not paid his club subscription. Sadly no cash was forthcoming, however, I should point out that Geoff is not a flesh and blood club member but an accurate facsimile manufactured by tying a weight to an old plastic container.

This playing with boats went on for nearly two hours before it was decided it was time to return to the marina for lunch. Rob and myself went for a mug of tea on an old light ship, which has been converted, into a restaurant and bar, atmospheric but not too expensive. Soon both the little and big hands of the clock told us it was time to drag ourselves away from the warmth of the light ship and back to sea.

The teams swapped ribs so that all gained experience of driving both club boats. We did more of the same plus simulated diver pick-ups, emergency stops and edging ashore using the depth sounder. Parking lessons for all ended the session, however, this is much worse than parking a car as that generally has only one or two back seat drivers, not half a dozen plus a similar number watching from the other rib.

About this time we took the opportunity to cruise around the marina trying to decide which boat we were going to buy in our dreams. It was generally accepted that the police had the best two boats. One was a fast day boat whilst the other was a fully equipped rib with twin 200 hp motors. There was some talk of "liberating" the rib but it was thought that the strange, blue, flashing navigation lamp it had was a bit off putting and that the two large men in blue uniforms standing by it might take a dislike to us. After getting the boats out of the sea, safely on their trailers, washing them down it was time to make our way home tired but happy. I would like to thank again the organisers of this event, enjoyed by all that were there.

John Rogers

Honour Role

Sports Divers

Kim Stevens
John Rogers
Nick Grange

Assistant Diving Instructors

Suzie Wenham
Dennis Wenham

Dive Coxswains

Neil Burgess

Chartwork and Navigation Aids Course

Suzie Wenham
Gawain Edwards
Neil Burgess,
Cormac O'Connell
Stephanie Riach

2005 Committee as Elected on 10th Feb 2005

Committee members

Diving Officer	Simon Parker	diving.officer@cambsac.com
Chairman	Suzie Wenham	chairman@cambsac.com
Training Officer	Neil Burgess	training.officer@cambsac.com
Treasurer	Chris Scott	treasurer@cambsac.com
Secretary	Bryony Harvey	secretary@cambsac.com
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Compressor Officer	Ben Pemberton	compressor.officer@cambsac.com
Boat Officer	Pete Willey	boat.officer@cambsac.com
President	Dennis Wenham	president@cambsac.com
Publicity officer	Clare Iazard	publicity.officer@cambsac.com
Assistant Dive Officer		assistant.do@cambsac.com
Committee Member	Nick Grange	committee.member@cambsac.com
Webmaster	Sam Wenham	webmaster@cambsac.com

Events planned for 2005

Date	Event	Location	Organiser
23/04/2005	Chart work and position fixing course	Boathouse Pub, Cambridge	Neil Burgess
24/04/2005	Chart work and position fixing course	Levington	Neil Burgess
29/04/2005	29 th April - 1st May 2005 - Trainee priority trip	Plymouth	Neil Burgess
12/05/2005	Dive trip	St Abbs	Ian T
19/05/2005	Dive Planning & Marshaling SDC	Boathouse	Neil Burgess
21/05/2005	Dive Planning & Marshaling SDC	Boathouse	Neil Burgess
28/05/2005	Whole club annual dive trip	Challaborough	Chris Scott & Christine Willey
09/06/2005	Dive Planning & Marshaling SDC	Boathouse	Neil Burgess
16/06/2005	City Sports Try dive, 7 to 9pm	Chesterton School, Cambridge	Chris Scott
27/07/2005	Dive trip	Newhaven	Simon Parker
15/09/2005	City Sports Try dive, 7 to 9pm	Chesterton School, Cambridge	Chris Scott
20/10/2005	Red Sea Liveaboard	Marsa Alam - Egypt	Dave Smith

Message from the Editor

Many Thanks to the people who have provided such informative, interesting and amusing articles for this edition of the newsletter. I hope that everyone enjoys reading them as much as I did when putting this together.

I hope these excellent examples provide inspiration to others to write. It would be nice to have a write up for each club trip. If people could have a quick discussion at the end of a trip and to find someone to put together something. Articles only need to be 1/2 - 1 page long (more is welcome) and you don't have to worry about the technical side just send me some text (with images if you want) and I will deal with all the layout etc

Please e-mail anything you would like included to newsletter@cambsac.com or see me at the pub.

Again Many Thanks to the authors,

Sam Wenham