



Turtle News

Issue 17

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Forthcoming Trips and Holidays

- Annual Dinner & Dance, WhiteWebbs Leisure Centre, Friday Dec 9
- Red Sea New Year. Sharm-el-Sheikh, Dec 29-Jan 5 £585
- Truk Lagoon Liveaboard, April 9-19 2006 £2200 + flights
- "D-Day" Wrecks of Normandy, June 5-9 and Aug 28-Sept 1 approx £375
- Maldives Liveaboard, November 4-17 £2080
- Regular Rib Weekends. Check the website in 2006 for dates
- Regular Mid-week Diving from Brighton and Eastbourne. Check the website in 2006 for dates

Extravaganza!

"Whose dumb idea was it to do a safety stop under the boat?", I thought, as an 8 foot silky shark made a menacing pass a few metres away. I quickly snapped a couple of

pictures while trying to attract Annie's attention, but she had already scrambled up the ladder, abandoning me to my fate! I surfaced, only to be told that the zodiac was returning, so I should drop

back to 4 metres and wait. Mr Silky returned, a little closer this time. "Wow!", I thought, "This is mega!" I turned to find the ladder, but discovered that I was face to face with a large Oceanic White Tip. No, wait- now there were two of them! Thankfully, Mr Silky didn't seem that interested, but the Oceanics were, well, let's say extremely curious (or hungry?!). Meanwhile on the surface, Kirsty was peering over the side, watching my antics. A large wave

hit the rib, dumping her into the water- apparently she clawed her way into the zodiac like a scalded cat! By now the Oceanic was heading straight at me, with



no intention of giving way. I lay back and pushed my fins up towards the advancing shark, hoping I could be fitted with prosthetic feet later! We passed within 2 feet of each other, and at this point, recognising that discretion is the better part of valour, I beat a hasty retreat. Some safety (?) stop, huh? This had all started in a scrum of luggage at Gatwick North- some had big bags, others small ones; some had tickets, others

worryingly didn't! But what we all shared, whether old hands at liveaboard trips, or newbies like me, was a sense of anticipation, for this expedition had been

built up as offering the best of the Egyptian Red Sea. We took off with 17 Adventure Divers, and as usual, the jollities had begun before the plane reached cruising altitude! Eventually we were flying over

the desert, and began our descent over the Red Sea, dotted with patches of reef, and small white specks, one of which would be our home for the next fortnight. Once we had sorted out cabin arrangements, and attended the "Boat Briefing", we introduced some of our merry band to the shisha pipe, and soon everyone was enjoying the balmy 25°C evening. Saturday brought checkout dives, and for me, a breaking of
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a 15 month drought from blue water diving. A second dive slowly turned into a night dive, which was followed by a night dive proper. Overnight we steamed up to Abu Nuhas, to dive the wrecks of the "Carnatic", "Giannis D" and "Marcus". The "Carnatic" is a truly classic dive, and was made even better when I climbed into the zodiac to find that this time I was only a passenger! I got a real buzz out of visiting the engine room of the "Giannis D"-even I couldn't get this one going!



Engine on "Giannis D"

(Which is saying something!- Ant) The highlight of the "Marcus" was the beautiful display of hard and soft corals. Things just got better when we were joined on the surface by a pod of dolphins. Donning fins and masks, we jumped into the sea to spend 20 minutes of quality time with these amazing creatures. The dolphins clicked away, and some of these stunning animals even came close enough for us to run our hands down their sides!

By Monday we had changed location again, and were diving the sites of Safaga. Once again we approached the wreck of the "Salem Express" with sombre respect- a passenger ferry, she struck the reef outside Safaga in December 1991, and went down with over 1000 lives. This wreck would make a stunning penetration dive, but, showing her the respect she is due, we toured the outside, taking in the unlaunched lifeboats, the Nike trainers on the seabed and the huge dent in the ferry's bow. For some reason most of us felt a little strange on this dive- perhaps the awful tragedy is still a bit too recent?

That night the "Valerie" motored to the remote Brothers Islands, and Tuesday morning found us making an early start to dive the "Aida". Starting at 28m, she drops down to 52m, and while some of the group descended to the depths, my new buddy, Annie, and I were content to take a look at the top of the wreck, and then make an Egyptian drift along the wall. After 60 minutes we surfaced and agreed that the next dive would be an English drift, with the current behind us! We made our next dive on the magnificent wreck of the "Numidia". As we swam over and through the wreck, we couldn't help but feel that the reef was trying to hide it from us- every inch was smothered with hard and soft, or fan, whip and black coral, and



Gazillions of fish

gazillions of fish did their best to get in the way! As we drifted back to the mooring we must have seen the entire contents of the Red Sea Reef Guide! After 89 minutes in this wonderland, we surfaced, wishing for more time down there. Annie still had 100 bar left- I swear she has gills! A third dive on the North Wall involved a drift along another spectacular reef, completing a great day's diving.

By the following day we'd moved to Little Brother, and there was only one word on everybody's lips: "Sharks!" Shockingly the first dive started at 5.59am! The 8 divers on our rib made a negative entry, rolling into the deep blue. We scurried down to 40m and waited.....but not for long! 3 large grey reef sharks came cruising in from the indigo depths. Sadly our deco time clicked down and we had to leave these striking creatures and wind our way up the reef wall, past the myriad of colours and shapes. For most of the dive we were escorted by 3 giant barracuda. It was at the end of our second dive that the Oceanics came to play! Little Brother was living up to its reputation! A final foray here turned up the comical sight of Lizzie hiding behind Uncle Bob and indicating her desire to ascend, while the ever present Oceanics circled menacingly!



Hunting lionfish

Night time brought more travelling, and we awoke on Daedalus Reef, ready for a special big blue dive in search of hammerheads. Unfortunately we missed the hammerheads and the reef, and spent 40 minutes hanging in the current in the blue. Some could have made better use of the time to do a Peak Performance Buoyancy Specialty! Computers are meant to be looked at, and insurance policies should be checked for depth limits! Remember the difference for a dive guide between hero and zero is only a couple of degrees on a compass! We made two more glorious dives on Daedalus, though for some the hubbly-bubbly beckoned, and Ray and Sarah spent the afternoon on the island with 6 lonely, but friendly lighthouse keepers.

Once again we cruised through the night, arriving at Rocky and Zabargad Islands. The excursions here produced the normal mega dives, and everyone was in the

water for over an hour, coming back with at least 50 bar. This was chilled diving to be sure!

After a heavy crossing in big seas (made easier by consuming large quantities of something made by Jack!), we reached St John's Reef. After our brilliant experiences earlier on the trip, these dives were a little spoilt by the presence of lots of other boats and a heavy surface swell, which affected light penetration. We still made a great dive through a cave and tunnel system, testing everybody's navigation skills to the limit. There were sore heads afterwards, and they weren't down to Jack!

By Monday we were cruising slowly northwards through the Fury Shoals. Here we dived some incredible submerged pinnacles, but the highlight was a site called "Heaven"- we spent 80 minutes exploring a labyrinth of coral heads and pinnacles, and only managed to cover half the site.

On Wednesday we reached the Elphinstone, where we were treated to some final shark action. After drifting along a really healthy hard and soft coral wall, we were joined on the safety stop by more Oceanic White Tips. Uncle Bob, Bertie and I hatched a plan which involved punching through the current and then drifting back on the south wall, away from the main reef. Sure enough we were joined by sharks, and spent our safety stop with 4 Oceanics. A small 4 footer shot up between us and actually breached the surface!

Our final day was blown out! The crossing to the Elphinstone was too rough, and we made do with a shallow, sandy bay with reduced visibility. There were no dugongs, but Brother Neil will remember this dive- won't you, Leeky Boy?!

This trip was billed as a Red Sea Extravaganza- it didn't disappoint! 41 dives later we were all corralled out! The crew couldn't do enough to help and the food was delicious. As for the diving, let's just say "I FEEL GOOD nanananananana!!!"

Thanks to Uncle Bob, Brother Neil, Krusty, Dory, Big Al, Lizzy, Wiz, Mark, Paul, Heather, Mike, Lancelot, Michelle, Annie, Bertie Bassett, Touché, Cinders..... and of course Angela Sharp, for making this the trip it was!

Article by Mitch Compton

Pictures by Mitch Compton and Sarah Corrigan

Seal of Approval

I couldn't wait! I hadn't found much time for diving this year, and had been absolutely gutted to miss the Farnes trip. But I was going to Oban! Hang about,



and I had the boat to ourselves, and the weather was stunning. After a brief tour around the islands, we came across a large colony of seals- I could hardly wait to get in the water with them! Within 10 minutes I had my first encounter, as a seal came and took



entrance to a long, shallow gully. 20 or so seals were there to greet us in water so shallow that we were almost snorkelling! Seals were swimming all around us with

where was Oban? When I looked at the map to find out, I saw that the Farnes were up that end of the country- what better than to stop off for a couple of days on the journey home, after sampling the delights of Scotland? If the drive up to Scotland wasn't too bad, the drive from Glasgow to Oban was beautiful. We had 3 days diving on some great wrecks on the west coast of Scotland, and then headed for the north east coast of England. This was to be the highlight of my trip, because it involved diving with seals. There is something so appealing about seals that has always made me want to go diving with them, and this was my chance. Uncle Bob, Beaver, Ray, Sarah, Froggy

a good, long look at us from 5 feet away.



speed and agility that made you dizzy just trying to watch! After 30 minutes we emerged from the gully and dropped down to 10m. I had a poke around and found my first ever octopus! We had 4 large wrasse eating out of our hands, and saw the great-granddaddy of all lobsters. Soon the seals reappeared, darting out of the gloom to nibble on our fins while we made our safety stop. This dive was my longest to date at 72 minutes- I didn't want to go home after that!! You can keep the Red Sea- it's "Seal Appeal" for me!

I was tingling from head to toe with excitement! The next 3 dives were just fantastic. On the last one, we were dropped off at the

Article and pictures by Simon Thornton

The Art of Zen

On a June morning in 1980, the captain of the new lorry ferry, the "Zenobia", was testing his ship's revolutionary autopilot technology, when something went horribly wrong. Water rushed in and she listed to port, sinking into the Cypriot sea. Her crew and passengers were evacuated, and she was pulled into deeper water, where she was allowed to sink. This disastrous maiden voyage had a huge spin off for divers because she is now one of the world's top ten wrecks. She probably earns more from divers than she ever would have done as a ferry! Various centres, including Mercury Divers and Cydive in Paphos operate tours on the "Zenobia", but I spent my 70 Cypriot Pounds with the Black Rock Dive Shop in Pissouri. They were laid back and a bit rough around the edges, but provided a very personal service. Remind you of anyone? 3 of us, including

the divemaster headed for Lanarca where we joined 25 or 30 other divers, and boarded a very big diveboat. From here it was a 15 minute ride to the wreck. My buddy was making his 3rd attempt to dive the "Zenobia", his previous attempts having been thwarted through no fault of his own. Now that he was on site, he was very excited- perhaps too excited, because no sooner had he kitted up than he started to get heart palpitations. Wisely he sat the dive out- poor sod! That left the divemaster and me, so we entered the water, which was a relief from the 32°C on deck. As soon as I peered down I could see the massive starboard funnel 12m below. It looked like I could have reached out and touched it! We dropped to the upturned hull and headed to the bow, past the lifeboats in their davits, and lorries hanging sideways off the deck. This gigantic ship is 165m long,

23m wide and displaced 10528 tonnes. We saw a few barracuda, jackfish and some smaller stuff. The temperature showed 25°C, but was colder in the thermoclines as we reached the bottom, at 34.5m. After 35 minutes we began our ascent past the bridge, reaching the shotline. Back on board we were fed and watered, and then relaxed for 90 minutes before the second dive. My buddy had recovered, so listened to the briefing- we'd have to head for the bow again, due to the current, but this time we would go inside!! Dropping down, we headed for the doors to the bridge. Inside remains of controls and cabling were still evident, but there has been pillaging in the past! We exited via the windows, and entered the canteen, avoiding projecting seat supports and ceiling tile hangers. We had time to play with the drinks dispensers,

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 241 Bullsmoor Lane
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Opening Hours

Mon - Fri : 10.00am to 6.30pm
 Wed : 10.00am to 8.00pm
 Sat : 10.00am to 5.00pm
 Sun : By appointment only

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Courses for 2006

Advanced Open Water	- Orientation 20th April - Open Water 22nd & 23rd April - Orientation 18th May - Open Water 20th & 21st May
Dry Suit Specialty	- Orientation 20th April - Open Water 22nd April - Orientation 18th May - Open Water 20th May
Enriched Air Nitrox	- Academics 17th April - Open Water 23rd April - Academics 15th May - Open Water 21st May
Emergency First Responder and Rescue Diver	- to be advised
Divemaster and Instructor Development	- by arrangement

FOR A FULL LIST OF COURSES, VISIT THE WEBSITE. TO BOOK ON ANY OF THE COURSES, CONTACT RAY AT THE CENTRE.

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and then headed out to the deck to investigate the jackknifed lorries, hanging precariously over the side. Surely they must collapse soon! We heard a deep humming, and turned around to see an ex-Russian submarine carrying sightseers around the wreck! It was a surreal moment as we waved back at the punters on board!! After 35 minutes we were back on the diveboat. This is a great day of diving, although it suits Advanced divers better. For the properly trained there are some tricky routes into the accommodation blocks, the two vehicle decks and the engine room. However, these dives have to be booked in advance, and are led by guides with intimate knowledge of the

"Zenobia".

If you visit Cyprus, then this dive is a must, but there is a range of sites suited to all levels of qualification, whether your fancy is caverns, walls or reefs (Jubilee Shoals is particularly spectacular). If you are considering a freelance trip there, I can arrange accommodation in a newly built, air conditioned, 2 bedroom apartment, with balcony and communal pool in a quiet area of Paphos, yet only 10 minutes walk from the bars, restaurants and nightlife. Adventure Divers members qualify for a discount of £50 per week. Contact Paul or Karen on 020 83662022 or visit: www.holidayinpaphos.co.uk

Article by Paul Collins

Society News

Season's Greetings! As the winter nights draw in, and diving kit gathers cobwebs your garages and attics, I hope that the articles in this edition of Turtle News bring a little sunshine into all our members' lives. Of course, there's no need to stop diving through the winter months- this is an excellent time to come down to a pool evening and keep your skills fresh! You might even consider doing a non-diving Specialty, like Lou's Project Aware: Coral Reef Conservation, Chris's excellent Photoshop Workshop, or Ray's unparalleled Equipment Specialty. And for the very brave we are still at Stoney Cove, teaching Advanced, Dry Suit, Nitrox, Navigation,

and Deep Specialties!

As you can see from Simon's great article on the Farne Islands, not all outstanding diving happens in exotic waters! In fact Adventure Divers have had amazing trips this year all around Britain, with the Farnes, Oban, Plymouth and the Scapa Flow being some of the highlights. Remember you don't have to go that far to do fantastic diving! Well done to John Murray for completing his Divemaster qualification, even though he was almost lost at sea during his mapping operation! Wishing you all a festive Christmas and a great New Year! See ya in the blue! Ant.

Magical Maldives

The islands of the Maldives are strewn across the equator, like a thousand jewels scattered from God's hand into the Indian Ocean. But the real treasure of



Carpets of coral festoon the overhangs on every reef, and turtles and eagle rays hover in the indigo depths. Night dives happen in a riot of activity, as packs of reef sharks follow

your torchlight, while moray eels prowl in the darkness. But the Maldives are truly magical when the gentle giants take centre stage. There is nothing more moving in the sea than the ballet of mantas, or the gargantuan grace of the whale shark.

As the spectacular sunset ends another day in paradise, you lie back and say, " Now that was a day of diving!"



FIND OUT ABOUT 2006's NOVEMBER LIVEBOARD.