

## November 2000

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### Evolution At Adventure Divers

The past six months has seen plenty of positive changes at Adventure Divers and there are many more to come. Firstly, as we are sure that many of you are already aware, Andy Wood has taken the decision to break away from Adventure Divers. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Andy for all of his hard work and enthusiasm during his time with Adventure Divers and we wish him all the best for the future.

Meanwhile it has been business as usual at the Dive Centre ... well almost !! Ray has been dragged, kicking and screaming, through the technological revolution. Regular tea makers will have noticed the appearance of a flash new state of the art computer, complete with professional quality scanner, printer and sophisticated publishing and web creation software. We are still getting to grips with it, but we should now be able to offer regular newsletters.

Our Internet site is also undergoing a transformation. Having dropped the "demon" (see new web and e-mail address on page 4) our web site is currently being re-designed and once up and running it should provide up to date news and information about trips, holidays, forthcoming events, new products and special offers. It should also be possible for browsers to view an electronic version of "Turtle News". We will keep you posted.

Adventure Divers Diving Society, or "club" as most of you know it, has been the subject of much debate over the past year or so. We have thought long and hard about the best way forward for the "club" and have decided that from 1st January 2001 it will cease to exist in its current form. From January 2001 anybody will be able to take advantage of any one of our three pool nights:

**Mon - Tottenham Green or Walthamstow**

**Wed - Waltham Abbey**

**Thur - Walthamstow**

The costs will be as follows:

**Swim / Dive £3.00**

**Tank & Weights £3.00**

**BCD £2.00**

**Regulators £2.00**

In addition, anyone who takes a course or goes on an Adventure Divers trip or holiday will automatically receive "Turtle News" for 12 months. Copies will also be available at the Dive Centre for anyone to pop in and pick up. We are hoping to introduce a loyalty card, offering very attractive discounts on dive equipment and air fills ... the more you spend the more you save! Again, watch this space for more details.

The more technically minded divers amongst you will also be pleased to know that we will soon be a TDI (Technical Divers International) facility. Although we are already an IANTD facility, and have been offering IANTD Advanced courses since 1995, we feel that TDI offers a better standard of academic training. We now plan to offer regular technical diving courses including Advanced Nitrox, Extended Range, Re-breather and Gas Blender courses. Ray will be at Stoney Cove on the second Wednesday of each month offering technical training and of course PADI Specialty courses.

The evolution is set to continue!

### **AD Gets A Refit**



Adventure Diver, or AD as she is affectionately known, has served Adventure Divers remarkably well over the past 10 years. However, regular divers cannot fail to have noticed the increasing regularity with which the tubes have needed to be re-inflated! Despite some valiant attempts to patch her up, finally we had to admit defeat and in July the decision was taken to replace the aging tubes. A short journey to Henshaw Inflatables in Wincanton (thanks must go to Robin Gosling at this point) and we were assured that in just two weeks she would be looking as good as new. The time out of the water also gave us the opportunity to sort out a couple of other niggling little problems, including the navigation lights and the GPS system. So after just two weeks and a bit of cosmetic surgery, AD was almost back to her former glory ... okay, the engine maybe a little bit tired but one thing at a time please!

Since her re-launch and with her old skipper now back out of retirement, AD has (contrary to popular belief) made numerous journeys outside of Weymouth harbour, including several trips to the Aeolian Sky, Lulworth Banks and the James Fennel. Next season, when she is not on training duties, AD will be available for pleasure diving and in the hands of a capable skipper, she can

easily reach Weymouth's most popular offshore dive sites such as the Buccaneer, M2, Bennendijk, Alex Van Opstel and the Salsette. In addition, we are also planning a number of away weekends, including visits to Swanage, Plymouth and Hallsands. The cost of diving from AD remains extremely competitive with dives in and around Weymouth harbour priced at just £10.00 and offshore dives at £15.00.

For those interested in taking the helm, we offer RYA Boat Handling courses for only £125.00. This two-day course covers basic theory and teaches you how to safely handle a boat through practical experience of steering, mooring, anchoring and basic seamanship.

If you would like to know more about AD's plans for next year or the RYA Boat Handling course, please call Ray or Lesley at the Dive Centre

### **Caroline - The Big 50 !**

Caroline has been with Adventure Divers since the very beginning, all the way back in 1988. An ASA Swimming Instructor, Caroline was instrumental in gaining pool time for Adventure Divers in the early days. When the Adventure Divers Dive Centre opened at Waltham Abbey 1990, Caroline's help in building and establishing the business was invaluable; she painted, cleaned, mopped and dusted with alarming proficiency. Always on hand to help out, Caroline willingly gave up her own time to cover Ray whilst he was out diving.

Already an Open Water Diver, Caroline continued her diving with Adventure Divers and also honed her boat handling skills to perfection (boat handling skills at night remain questionable however). Caroline began her Advanced Open Water Course in the late 80's. However, the small matter of "hand-holding" during the deep dive prevented a speedy certification - Caroline was finally signed off this year!

Today, Caroline remains fastidiously loyal and is arguably the most valued member of the Adventure Divers team. Her continued commitment to kit configuration on Monday and Wednesday evenings and customer service and satisfaction on Saturdays is highly valued and much appreciated.

In September, Caroline reached the half century and this seemed to be an appropriate time for everyone to show their thanks and gratitude. A surprise party was organised and a jolly good time was had by all. The collection raised enough to send Caroline on a well deserved trip to see her long time friend Sandra in the Dominican Republic.

Many thanks to John & Trish and Keith & Colette who organised the event and to Steve & Paul who provided the disco.

Finally, the biggest thank you has to go to Caroline - keep taking the happy pills girl!

Thanks to all from Caroline.

Another day in the shop with Ray and Steve, an evening meal pending with John, Trish, Keith and Colette and a profound sense of guilt for not inviting Steve ... "no I'm watching telly" he insisted ... "don't feel so guilty!" Meanwhile, John and Trish were praying that nobody slipped up and said "see you later then Caroline." Shop duties done, glad rags on, John, Trish and myself were en-route to pick up Keith and Colette from the gym, then off to dinner at a new Italian restaurant in Epping. Arriving at the sports centre I said ... "busting, need the loo now." Trish insisted ... "go in the hall" ... "No!" I replied, "I can't gate crash a private party to use the loo!" However, needs were such I took Trish's advice and rushed straight into what I thought was a private party, only to be greeted by a hoard of familiar faces including Steve "I'll be watching telly" Groome! My first words ... "Sorry, but I really must go!" ... Not the best entrance to a surprise party but nature must rule. I hope you all forgave me and I cannot say thank you enough for a very special evening made possible by so many very special friends. Special thanks for everything to Trish, John, Lesley, Ray, Colette, Keith and everyone who made it happen by being there. Thanks to Ray and Lesley for my AOW Cert (nice touch) and to Steve and Paul for the Disco. Last but no means least, thank you all for the wonderful surprise gift of my trip to the Dominican Republic to see Sandra. A birthday I will never forget!

## Love Caroline

### Oban - A Quiet Easter of Wrecks And Reefs ?



This should have been a quiet Easter of wrecks and reefs in the Scottish highlands, clear water, picturesque landscapes, maybe a single malt or two round a log fire, but essentially just diving. But it turned out to be a little more than that.....

We should have known something was up, Ray insisted that we had to be ready for an early start as we had "something to do". Those of you who have been on an Adventure Divers trip - or any dive trip for that matter - will know that "on time" is not a term widely used. Ray arrived at the shop in a new polo shirt and long trousers ... (no shorts or bum bag ?!?!?) and Lesley frankly didn't smell like a diver should ... she was perfumed! Initial guesses were a court appearance. Cards were given out to all present (well it was Easter) except, these were not Easter cards but wedding invitations. RSVP not necessary, we are going now - reception to be held on the M6. The minibus was frantically loaded and we were off to Enfield Registry Office for a speedy ceremony. I was called upon to perform witness duties - wearing jeans that had just had an eggy breakfast accident (which is why my hand is always in the same place on the wedding photos). Handshakes, kisses and congratulations were exchanged and we were off, next stop an off

licence in Glasgow for the wedding toasts. Thanks have to go to Rob who was driving at this point and stayed resolutely sober despite the party going on behind him.

Oban lies on the west coast of Scotland at the bottom of Mull. It's a very picturesque area with mountains surrounding all of the inlets. The drive up was tortuous as is usual for these expeditions - and no I'm not just saying that because I sat next to Andrea who pointed out all of the landmarks that accompanied her life's history (and these appeared with alarming regularity) - but the trip took over 14 hours in a fully loaded minibus.

Puffin Dive centre is the slickest operation I have seen - their facilities are superb and the staff are very knowledgeable and the briefings detailed but not intrusive - it was still your dive. It's worth noting though, that Nitrox fills are expensive so it's advisable to only use it when necessary. We were allocated two modern chalets that would sleep 7 in a combination of 2 twins, 1 single and 1 bunk room. These were in excellent condition with the usual fixtures and fittings.

Our dive boat was to be the Urchin. This was a purpose built twin hull vessel that had a platform at the rear for exits and a moon pool with a telescopic ladder for entry. This in itself was a weird experience as the boat had to 'run over' you to pick you up. This worked really well as you were sheltered from the elements when boarding. The ladder was fine in theory, but in practice it was flawed. The rungs seemed a little far apart and too close to the deck. You also have to watch your head on the way up ... I didn't ... several times. That said, I think I was the only person to slip off the ladder (naturally), but there were no serious mishaps. The boat has a large covered area with seats, and each diver is allocated a wet and dry storage locker. Hot drinks are plentiful and lunch is provided. Our evening's entertainment was provided in town where the local single malts could be sampled. We spent most evenings in a Scottish themed restaurant - a tourist trap I guess but the food and atmosphere were good nonetheless.

## The Diving

**The Shuna** - a cargo ship carrying coal, the Shuna went down in 1913, after striking a rock while en route to Gothenburg. She is a relatively recent find having only been discovered in 1990. The wreck sits upright in around 30 meters of water and is fairly well preserved with the exception of the decks. The propeller, cargo holds, engine room and rigging are easily identifiable.

**SS Thesis** - lying on an incline with her bow at 20 meters and her stern at 35 meters. Thanks to the shingle bottom and slight current, visibility is excellent. The sides of the wreck are badly broken in places offering great opportunities for safe penetration. Although there is very little to see inside, other than the boiler (allegedly populated by a large conger) the swimming area is quite large and illuminated making this a very picturesque dive.

**The Rhondo** - a famous wreck, and surely near the top of most divers wish lists due mainly to her resting position. She is almost 'nose down' vertical with the rudder a mere 6m from the surface and a maximum depth of around 50m. The Rhondo enjoyed a chequered history having been originally built as a cargo vessel in 1918 she was renamed 4 times before finally being christened the Rhondo in 1934 - a few months later she ran aground after slipping her anchor in a storm.

Despite efforts to save her, she slipped from her position and sank. This is a dramatic wreck because of its near vertical orientation, and abundance of aquatic life, but there is very little superstructure left (unless its down at 50m, I only got down to 42m). Prospective divers should be aware of currents that run over this wreck. If you venture outside the body of the wreck, you may drift backwards and upwards quite quickly and as I found to my cost (the frantic swim against it does not help air consumption.)

**SS Hispania** - for me, this was the star of the show, rivalled only (okay, in my limited experience - I haven't done the Salsette yet) by the Tabarka and the Thistlegorm. This is also quite a sad wreck as it is one of the few documented in recent times of a captain choosing to go down with his ship. In 1954 the Hispania entered the sound amid a raging storm. With visibility almost zero, she ran into Sgeir Mor and started to take on water. Listing heavily to port, the captain ordered the launch of the lifeboats but refused to leave his bridge. Today she sits at 30 metres and is extremely well preserved. It is possible to swim along the walkways between the cabins and railings, through corridors and into the holds. A slight current keeps the decks clear of silt but be careful once inside, exit points could easily be hidden if the silt is kicked up. This is one of those wrecks that due to its position, size, lack of visible damage and clear water actually makes you 'feel' like you are on a ship and with its tragic history makes a near perfect wreck dive.

**SS Meldon** - the Meldon fell victim to a pattern of mines laid in the Firth of Lorna in 1917. After the impact an attempt was made to run her ashore, but strangely she now faces out to sea. This is quite an impressive wreck as, although badly broken, the rudder breaks the surface and her huge propeller lies only a few meters below. There is very little of the superstructure left and the interior is largely covered in kelp, fine sand surrounds the outside. In fact if the water level was some 14m lower it would make a very nice beach. Obviously some of our more experienced colleagues got a little bored on this relatively shallow wreck; the newlyweds decided to go on a thieving spree. Just about all of the divers were 'relieved' of at least one piece of kit be it a goodie bag, ankle weight or knife. Justice was done though when Ray found he was a bit heavy with his extras and struggled to get up the ladder.

**The Breda** - this adventure playground for rummagers was part of a convoy anchored at Oban en-route to Bombay when it was attacked and sunk in 1940 by squadron of German Heinkel. The wreck is upright, intact and still contains a lot of cargo in three of its holds this includes aircraft parts, newspapers, sheets of Indian rupees, dental supplies, cement and clothing (in fact, just about everything required to set up and sustain a small Indian town). The shot is at the stern end, and it is an interesting swim over the decks and up to the bow where holds one and two contain most of the artefacts. Due to it's reputation this is a very popular dive site and visibility around the forward holds can get a cloudy.

All in all an excellent and eventful weekend. Thanks to all of the divers who made it fun, Andrea, Terry, Ian, Julie, Pat, Chris, Rob, Jerome and Graham and of course, congratulations and best wishes to Mr & Mrs Clark.

Ian Smith