

Turtle News

Issue 13

November 2004

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Forthcoming Trips and Holidays

- Sharm el Sheikh New Year trip 26th December to 2nd January. 5 days diving and New Year party! £538
- Red Sea Wrecks Liveaboard on MY Valerie. 25th march to 1st April 2005.
- Midweek Hard Boat Diving- throughout the summer. Dates and sites to be announced.

On the Trail of Sharks Cousteau



I hovered over the coral pinnacle, watching the silver trail of divers' bubbles disappearing over the edge of the drop off -and then the sharks came in! Sleek, grey and far too curious for my liking, they turned in ever decreasing circles around my isolated position, investigating the alien invading their world. It was with some relief that I saw my buddy, a mere Course Director who had forgotten her computer, free-

falling towards me from the surface. Disappointed, the sharks melted back into the blue. I began to wonder if all the inhabitants of the Sudan were so hostile to visitors-our arrival in the country had been marked by chaotic immigration formalities, passports vanishing with a highly suspect official, and a full search of all our luggage, as we were led in small groups into an interrogation hall! The coach trip from

the airport to the harbour was marked by roadblocks manned by armed militia, adding to our disquiet. As we finally boarded the "Connda Vennessa" in the wee hours, Rosie Frampton, our Scottish skipper welcomed us to her home with a friendly smile and a bitterly cold can of Sakara Gold!

We were in much better spir-

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Christmas Dinner & Dance
Saturday 4th December
Tickets £30 - On Sale Now

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its as we made our check out dive on the MS "Umbria", one of the Red Sea's classic wrecks. This largely intact vessel is a superb dive with its teeming fish life, stunning encrustation of hard coral and limitless potential for penetration. The holds are packed with cargo, including 360,000 bombs intended for the Italian army in Africa during WWII, loads of crated ammunition, 3 elegant Fiat Lunga cars and an ample supply of wine. We made 3 fantastic dives on this glorious wreck that lies in about 30m, and took great delight in swimming down the interior passageways, exploring the galley, saloon and magnificent engine room.

But diving in Sudan is all about one thing-big fish with teeth. We headed north to the reefs of Sanganeb and Sha'ab Rumi in search of the ocean's ultimate predator. I don't think any of us will ever forget the south plateau of Sha'ab Rumi, as we found ourselves surrounded by a shiver of 40 or 50 grey reef sharks, lazily pointing into the pumping current. A loud banging announced the arrival of a large school of humphead parrotfish, at the plateau's cleaning station. These dopey creatures are



the true Homer Simpsons of the marine world! However the stars of the show were the outlandish scalloped hammer heads, that made tantalising passes at the very edge of the visibility. Over the course of the week we made several dives on this outstanding site, and on the last occasion I memorably saw a pod of dolphin porpoising past the point, pursued by a sinister silky shark.

Sha'ab Rumi was famously the site of

Jacques Cousteau's Conshelf II project. I vividly remember spending the Sunday afternoons of my childhood in a landlocked country in Africa, watching episodes of the Silent Sea on a black and white television. It was with a sense of deja vous that I finally



followed in Cousteau's historic footsteps and explored the remains of the project that had inspired me to become a diver so many years before.

By the time we returned to Sanganeb Reef, we were all becoming a little blasé about grey reef sharks, and our air consumption was not nearly as wild when they were around. That was all about to change. Rosie was desperately trying to prove her point that where the school of big-eye jacks hang out on the drop off, the hammerheads are sure to follow. As we bumbled along at 20m, she suddenly became very animated and incredibly, just where the jacks were milling about, a pair of elusive hammerheads cruised out of the blue and made an extremely close pass to our group. It has been some time since I have seen as much camera activity, or quite so many bubbles!

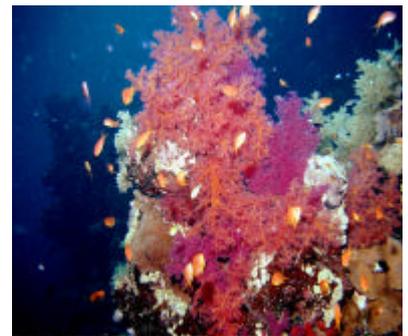
Sharks aside, the reefs of Sudan have to be dived for the stunning masses of colourful soft corals. Few sites anywhere can rival the abundance and profusion of coral that creates a living kaleidoscope on these current swept reefs. Of course, this is also a fish watchers paradise and I have to admit to getting a headache from not knowing where to look next! I dived with a digital camera for the first time here, and by the end of the trip I was amazed by the diversity of pictures I'd taken.

It was with a sense of sadness that we began our southward journey. As I watched the imposing lighthouse on Sanganeb dwindle on the horizon, I

reflected on a week of amazing diving, superb company and a comfortable boat that had felt like home. Nothing had been too much for Rosie and her crew, from the hearty porridge for breakfast, to the highly entertaining belly-dancing cabaret on the last night. Not too many operators will take you water skiing during your surface interval!

Having spent the first day of our trip in Cairo, touring the Egyptian museum and the Pyramids, the adventure wouldn't have been complete if we hadn't explored down town Port Sudan. After a wander through the market, our guide took us to the tailor's stalls, where we bought the flowing robes characteristic of the Middle East. It was amusing to see Port Sudan come to a standstill, as a huge crowd gathered to watch the crazy westerners trade shorts and t-shirts for galabiyas! The true find of the trip was a dingy little café where we drank fragrant Arabic coffee and almost reached Nirvana on some very fine hubbly bubbles!

It's a pity that the Sudan is so internally unstable, as this does detract from some of the finest diving the Red Sea has to offer. However, it may also protect it from the inundation that's happened in Egypt. I, for one, count myself privileged to have seen the treasures of these beautiful reefs and couldn't have



asked for better companions to share the experience with. If we went to see sharks, then a line I wrote in my logbook sums up the trip: "If orange and blue are the colours you normally associate with the Red Sea, today we added GREY!"

Words and Pictures by ANT

Sun, Sea and Lost SMB's

Many a time have I launched my SMB and never had a problem. In fact as I have always managed to successfully deploy the thing it amazed me that they cause some people such hassle. Mr Sod from Sods Law Ltd must have read my thoughts and decided to teach me a lesson that would change my mind.

I signalled my buddy that it was time to ascend and we lifted slightly off the wreck so I could send my delayed SMB to the surface. Once again this procedure went smoothly and I was soon reeling in the line. When we arrived at 11 meters I noticed my buddy at about the same depth getting further away from me. Up until now we had both been drifting in the current at the same rate but suddenly I had sped up, still going the same direction as the current but a lot faster than my buddy. Looking at my dive computer and back at my buddy it was obvious I was also ascending, still picking up speed. It's strange but things kind of slowed down. I didn't worry as I knew I could simply let go of the reel and go to my back up. It's funny how at times like this money flashes in front of your eyes. I remember crashing my car once and the first thing I thought of was the money it was going to cost me and I had serious pound signs flashing in front of me. Back to the SMB situation - I decided to click the line release, assuming that my blob had been caught on a boat. I figured they would soon find out and release my equipment. I finally realised that my line was now almost all played out and I must have resembled the scene from Jaws when the shark just runs away with the line while they're fishing off the back of the boat. I



Oh buoy! Reel life drama

coolly decided to remove my shears and cut the line. The whole time I was still in contact with my buddy as it was the line that was being reeled off rather than me being dragged along. I cut the line and the drama was over. My buddy already had his back up out and was ready to deploy. He did this with no hiccups and we finished our ascent as planned. Now my problem was that I had a reel with no line, and I was once again calculating the cost of a new SMB.

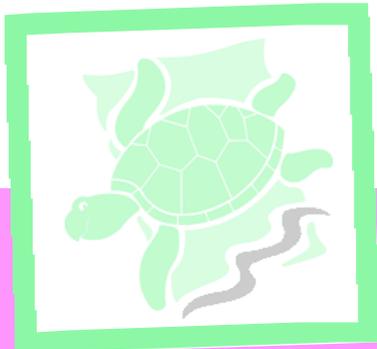
Back on the boat we mounted a surface search and managed to find my SMB. We headed back to shore where I untangled it in preparation for the afternoon dive.

At the site of the afternoon dive there was some piss taking from the rest of the boat about my deployment skills. We headed to the bottom for a rather brisk drift dive. Once at the bottom the SMB was again deployed with no problems. Smugly, I hadn't realised Mr Sod had continued his diving career and was about to strike again. There were 3 of us in the drift with two SMB's between

us. Suddenly the lines on both SMB's started to go in the opposite direction of the drift. My first irrational thought was that the bloody idiots on the boat were messing about. As we both hung on, the third buddy was getting out of site. I let go of my reel watching it disappear into the distance. At the same time the other reel carrier cut his line as I had done on the first dive. We reformed the buddy 3 and a spare blob was soon deployed. Our ascent was without incident and soon we were all back on the boat. You can imagine their faces when we asked if they had seen two lost SMB's. Some more piss taking was sure to come. We searched and searched but the sea was now rather rough and I had almost given up hope when one of the guys suggested that the lines might have been caught on a lobster pot marker. Sure enough after a brief search we located a lone floating SMB. It was mine! We pulled up the line until we could pull no more and realized my reel was tangled. I decided that I might as well put my mask on and jump in to have a look along the lobster pot line. A couple of metres below the surface I found my reel. I pulled myself down the line and untangled it. My lost equipment had been recovered for the second time that day! We looked around a bit more for my mate's SMB but decided that it was lost. He still had his reel so wasn't too sad. I did feel a bit guilty though as mine had been lost and recovered twice and we were now giving up on his.

It was a great weekend though, and things like this don't happen often. I hope.....

Words & Pictures by An Ony Mouse



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 Sun : By appointment only

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Society News

• Yes, it's back! After a year in hibernation, Turtle News has finally resurfaced. We aim to ensure that quarterly newsletters arrive on your doorsteps with a little more regularity in 2005! It has been an eventful year at Adventure Divers with well supported trips at home and abroad. In April we ventured into the Sudanese Red Sea for some very special shark diving. May found us back in Sharm el Sheikh, while an extremely fortunate group enjoyed a luxurious liveaboard in September, visiting the Brothers, Elphinstone and Salem Express. October found the Ray Clark Group playing the Sounds of Mull in Oban, Scotland- not the Red Sea, but superb diving nonetheless! While the local diving season got off to a slow start with a pretty miserable spring and early summer, the rib ran regularly on the South Coast. The Swanage weekends have proved to be increasingly popular, and by August we were having to allocate dives by roster! Our busiest weekends coincided with the school holidays and many of us were reacquainted with the pleasures of camping. Some memorable lobster barbecues ensued on the top of the hill overlooking Swanage bay! A big thanks to all those who made the operation of these weekends so successful. Training has continued in the School throughout the year. Well done to everyone who successfully completed

courses in 2004, especially those of you who braved the snow at Stoney Cove in February! A special word of congratulations goes to our newest Instructors, Mitch Compton, Louise Dalton, Daren Davies and Neil Gibbens who all passed their examinations this year, strengthening our teaching team.

In June we spent an informative evening at the Sultan, during which presentations were made by the Nautical Archaeological Society, and our own Chris Hands- his talk on photography has left most of us wanting to learn more!

Once again the Riverboat disco, held in the summer, proved to be a huge success, firmly cementing its place in the Adventure Divers social calendar. The next big event is the Christmas Dinner and Dance, being held at the Whitewebs Leisure Centre. Contact the shop to reserve your tickets!

The launch of our new website is imminent, and we expect to be up and running by the end of November. Please visit the site to keep updated with regard to forthcoming trips, events and courses.

Finally, after much demand, Louise Dalton will be making a presentation on Coral Reef Conservation on 25th November. With first hand experience of the subject she promises to keep us stimulated. Please support her!

See ya in the blu,
 Ant.

Courses

- Advanced Open Water**
 - Orientation 11th November
 - Open Water 13th & 14th November
 - Orientation 16th December
 - Open Water 18th & 19th December
- Dry Suit Specialty**
 - Orientation 11th November
 - Open Water 14th November
 - Orientation 16th December
 - Open Water 18th December
- Enriched Air Nitrox**
 - Academics 13th December
 - Open Water 19th December
- Rescue Diver & Emergency First Responder**
 - Academics commencing 2nd December
- Project Aware: Coral Reef Conservation**
 - 25th November (venue to be announced)
- Gas Blender Course**
 - 11th December

Congratulations

- Open Water**
 Giuseppe Amodio, Anthony Archer, Gary Ayton, Darren Baker, Michael Bridgman, Ian Bronstein, Ashley Chamberlain, Stuart Cornwell, Alan King, Tony McNally, Steven Mellowship, Martin Mills, Paul Mills, Philip Mills, Steve Mondey, Terry Monksfield, Peter Nicolaides, Paul Oyler, Ben Porter, Alexandra Prior, Kate Prior, Mohammad Rahman, Roy Reyland, Darren Ryall, Sam Ayling, Adam Caplin, Rob Fairweather, Natalie Howard, Nic Saunders, Justin Taylor, Chris White, Jay Williams, Natalie Willis, Gavin Winters, Simon Woodward
- Advanced Open Water**
 Gary Ayton, Darren Baker, John Gladding, Rob Harrison, Alan King, Farshid Mohammed, Jim Poole, Chris White
- Dry Suit Specialty**
 David Aanonson, Geoff Aanonson, Mark Ayling, Darren Baker, Victoria Beasley, James Belcher, Hazel Brockhurst, Oliver Buxton, Paul Harding, Rob Harrison, Alastair Hick, Dana Hurst, Alan King, Liz Letch, Danny Lowe, Alan Mair, Terry Monksfield, Lisa Palmer, Andy Postill, Pauline Salisbury, Colin Steele, Simon Thornton, Brian Watson, Chris White, Simon Woodward

TO BOOK ON ANY OF THESE COURSES OR FOR ALTERNATIVE DATES, PLEASE CALL RAY OR DAREN AT THE DIVE CENTRE.