



WHAT'S BUBBLING



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The Magazine of Ealing Sub-Aqua Club (BSAC 514)
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Enter the Great ESAC Photo Competition



Have you taken a great picture underwater this year? Do you feel smug about it? Then enter it into the club's photo competition.

Login into the members' area and follow the link to upload and enter your prize-winning photo. The competition will run on the ESAC web site and visitors will be invited to vote.

The rules are quite straight forward:

- One member one photo, but you can change your mind up until the entry closing date.
- The photo must have been taken between Jan and Nov '06 and dive details must be given.

The entry closing date is 31st Dec and voting begins in the new year. The result will be announced at the next AGM.



The AGM held on Sunday 26th Nov '06

Well that was the fastest AGM I have ever attended in the living history of our club. I made 1 hour and 10 minutes before we were all next-door in the pub. Now that's the way to sort business!

We will issue a full set of minutes in due course. One of the highlights for me was the announcement that James Anderson as Treasurer has secured a deal with the taxman to recover the VAT on the fuel our boats' use. Well done James, two years of VAT has been returned!

My thanks to the outgoing committee for its work this year. The club is solvent, the boats and training equipment are in good shape.

The Biggest Bottom time went to Dominic Watts, even though there was an objection from the floor, which was quickly overruled. The funniest moment went to Rob Killick and his birdman impression

on a rapid drift dive. The captured video of the incident was submitted to the AGM as evidence and left the audience rolling in the aisles! The web editor is already scouring the Internet to find a pirate copy to download! The Biglin award was given to me for the work on the web site. Red faced and lost for words I was honouredmy thanks to whoever nominated and voted for me.

Alas, somehow I seem to be the chairman again. I must learn to say no. I'm really pleased with the balance of the committee this year. We have a number of new faces and some returning ones and I believe every member of the committee is committed to working for the club. As members of this club we need your help. Please offer support when asked.

So who's doing what:

Chairman	Nigel Ealand
Diving Officer	Rik Nash
Training Officer	Jackie O'Dowd
Membership Secretary	Ian Oliver
Secretary	Rebecca Weston
Equipment Office	Dennis Philpott
Boat Officer	Tony Quish
Treasurer	Paul Chan
Social Secretary	Enrico Marconi

Best regards
Nigel

Crossword

	<p>ACROSS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take a walk and enter the water (6) 2. Sun + Moon + Sea = ***** (5) 3. Bouncing along on a tide (6) 4. All you got left to move the boat when engine stops! (4) 5. Use this to join to ropes (5,4) 6. Like to see lots of these while diving (6) 7. EANx (6) 8. Piped air diving (7) 9. Propulsion to a French end (3) 10. The robin hood of a knot not easily mastered (7) 11. Taking it easy after 3 above (4) 12. Sort the hips for a wreck dive (4) 13. The caves in our head (7) <p>DOWN</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Someone with a massive bottom time in one dive (10,5) 2. Yell Mayday into it! (5) 3. 2 and a flare signals it (8) 4. A divers weapon the police don't like (5) 5. A fish on your shoulder (6) 6. Getting married to make a knot (5) 7. Good to hear, bad to clear! (4) 8. Nitrogen narcosis occurs when..... (4,6) 9. Has great legs as seen swimming on the ESAC web site (7) 10. Across 5 and 10 and you have it (5) 11. The roar of a cat like fish (4) 12. A maritime help!
<p>© ESAC puzzles</p>	

EVENTS...EVENTS...EVENTS...EVENTS

Two new events have been added to the ESAC calendar:

The New Year's Day Dive and Lunch

Date: 1st January 2007 (obviously!)

Time: 10 am

Location: Black Park

Description: first dive 2007

The organiser: Rik Nash

Come along to our first dive of 2007, the usual place in Black Park Lake, on the way to Iver off the A40. If you, like me, are not brave enough to take the plunge - join us anyway for a glass of mulled wine and a slice of panetone, whatever the temperature. Followed by the usual pub lunch at the local. For more information please check the noticeboard at the dive club.

Marine conservation night with bangers & mash supper

Date: Saturday 6th January 2007

Time: 7pm

Location: TBC

Description: Presentation from Polly Wood of Reef Conservation International

The organiser: Enrico Marconi and Nigel Ealand

Ever considered marine conservation work? What does it involve? What is the state of the world's oceans? Polly Wood from ReefCI will talk about her work in Belize. The venue will depend on the numbers interested. To add to the entertainment we will include some videos and photos taken on club diving holidays this year. See the Belize report below.

Regards

Rico

[Christmas Ceilidh](#)

We've done the ballroom dancing, now it's the ceilidh. At least this time it didn't matter where you put your feet! Last Saturday the club held a ceilidh evening at Deane Park Hall in South Ruislip. It may have been cold outside but we were all in a hell of a sweat. With the usual great band and wonderful food and enough drink to send us on our way, a great time was had by all.



A tale from a warmer climate - from Rob Pratt

Robert Pratt is an ex-ESAC member and instructor who has for the last five years been working full-time as a diving instructor in Thailand, Honduras and Mexico.

ANOTHER DAY AT THE OFFICE

So it's just another day at the office. I'm down at 30m on a dive site in Cozumel called Punta Sur with six divers and we've got the scooters - sorry, 'Diver Propulsion Vehicles' (yeah you got it, the whole James Bond thing). Pulling a nifty banking turn I head for a promising-looking tunnel in the reef and head in.

Problem : Coming the other way in same tunnel is a 5ft black-tip reef shark with what appears to be a hook in it's mouth. I'm not sure who was more surprised - me or the shark! It looks pissed.

Anyway, after a moment's hesitation the shark luckily decides to turn around and head out. We exit the tunnel and even get treated to a second black-tip though this one's only 1ft long. At this point (just 10 minutes into the dive) the classic happens - one of the scooters breaks down. I give the diver mine and generally bang, rattle and swear at the other but to avail - the bastard's dead. I now become the human torpedo. My divers are paying extra money to use the scooters and we've got another half hour of diving to go. So off I fin. (Any of you who are divers will appreciate that finning like a bastard at 30m is not the most fun or healthiest thing to be doing on a Friday morning).

Twenty minutes later we're just finishing the last of Punta Sur's three pinnacles and I'm bracing myself for a torpedo-like fin across the blue to a second reef when I notice one of my group heading rapidly towards me giving what appears to be an out-of-air signal. But it can't be - I've dived all week with this client who happens to be a divemaster herself and has superb air-consumption. So we're currently at 22m and I've got to admit her eyes are looking a little wider than usual so I'm straight to her with the spare regulator from my tank. Once her breathing is back under control and we're starting our ascent together I check her gauge, and yes it's showing empty. It turns out that the turbulence from the scooter propeller must have caused her own spare regulator to freeflow during the dive causing her tank to empty rapidly but unnoticed by anyone including her and me.

Maybe that desk back in an office overlooking the Heathrow airport runway wasn't so bad after all!?

Who am I kidding. I wouldn't swap this for the world :-)

May your bubbles always float upwards

Best wishes from Mexico

ROB

Anyone wanting to read up on Christine Newton's travels, tap into her blog address - <http://paulaustin.travellerspoint.com> - Chris and Paul regularly update the site.

Belize – Reef Conservation International – by Nigel Ealand

My company very kindly gave me the opportunity to take a period of extended holiday. Knowing this was coming I had spent a long time researching where I would go. My initial thought was to offer my service to Operation Raleigh, an organisation that specialises in adventure tours for teenagers. Many years ago I had been involved in teaching a group to dive before they travelled to Belize to do marine conservation work. I always wondered how the group had got on and if they had had a good time. This seemed an opportunity to combine diving and instructing. I had even got my Advance Instructor qualification the year before in preparation. Unfortunately a call to their London office revealed that they no longer have scuba diving as part of their holidays.

This was a proverbial torpedo in my plans. Slightly disheartened, I went back to the drawing board. Marine conservation work seemed like a great idea. I wanted to do something constructive and I like diving. After more research and an introduction contact through Craig Burrell I eventually joined Marine Conservation International in Belize for four weeks of sun, sea, diving and a little pay back to the underwater world.

Hopping Heathrow, Miami to Belize International airport I met up with Dave, Mark and another Nigel on route to Punta Gorda (locally known as “PG”). We were met at the airport by Polly, the owner of the company, Colin her operations manager and Dukes a local lad who was training for his Dive Master qualification.

PG may at first sight seem a little threadbare, the water and electricity may only be on a few hours a day, but the people are the most friendly and warm that I have ever known. Our first day we went along to the town square where the Creole Rebels were playing. They had a dance competition and I tell you the way some of the kids danced would make Christina Aguilera look like a pensioner.



Monday morning and we pack up the boat with a week of provisions and head out to Franks Caye. The Caye is about 30 miles off shore and can't be more than 100m wide by 300m long. We lived in Cabanas and meals were taken in the restaurant and bar. The water used for toilets and showers was collected rainwater. The electricity comes from the island's generator. Living was basic but comfortable. There were no mosquitoes but plenty of sand flies. Holding them at bay requires the application of copious amounts of baby oil. If I had a body like Atlas I would have considered that cool!

Each morning we woke at 0615 and by 0730 were already diving, which is how life should be. The diving is great; there is an abundance of coral and life. Since Belize is one of the few areas in the world with a barrier reef, the diving usually amounted to spectacular drop offs and finished in beautiful coral reefs.



In the first week we learnt fish and coral identification. I can't say I was very good but at least I had plenty of time and incentive to practise! In one of my first dives on a wall I watched an Eagle Ray swim in towards us and then immediately a turtle took off from the reef in front of us. I didn't know which way to point my camera first. An important part of the conservation work was to do Reef checks. This involves counting particular species as well as tagging to monitoring migration habits. One dive we did was to tag Conch shells and then to measure their dimensions. Every time I went to tag one it would get up and walk away!



One night was truly special. We were sitting out on the veranda supping a beer or two when someone noticed baby turtles in the water. We all grabbed our torches; I grabbed my cameras, and went out hunting. We found a turtle nest and the little turtles hatching and trying to make their way to the sea. Some needed a helping hand and were picked up and popped into the water.

On Fridays we returned to PG for the weekend. Naturally on our way on the first Friday we passed a pod of Dolphin. Most weekends were filled with activity. Nearby are the Maya ruins, an ancient civilisation that seem to have a preoccupation with a ball game and human sacrifices. On another weekend we went Manatees spotting and fishing. The last weekend was Polly's ** year birthday, so we partied on.

Anyway I digress. Here in paradise we're looking as good as ever. We returned to island on Monday to discover there had been more turtles hatching. Colin had discovered the nest and some dead turtles. Ants were attacking it and he had



to dig out the last of the turtles put them into a large bucket. Something strange was going on. Hatching normally happens at a full moon so the turtles can follow the light. There wasn't one at this time. That night we all gathered to release the turtles, pointing our torches out to sea with the hope they would find their way.

The problem with diving three times a day was that I was shattered by 2030 and had to go to bed. It was also evident that the marine life was just not used to having divers around. What is amazing is that they have lots of lobsters and they are so tame and you can get real close to photograph them. I even had them "feeling" the camera and me.

We did some night dives. The one big snag with this place is that they have sea lice and worms that come out at night and are attracted to the torch beam. They are horrible; it's like being surrounded by buzzing flies. The only way to get rid of them is to turn off your torch. On the other hand the one big advantage is seeing the "String of Pearls" light show. As bioluminescence critters start mating in long orgy fashioned strings you see what appears to be a string of pearls. The show is an experience, sitting on the sandy bottom, torches switched off watching a light show being played out.

My first reef survey and my job was to swim along a jackstay line and drop a plumb line every 50cm to determine the bottom substrate. It sounds easy until you have to control your buoyancy within inches so you don't crush the coral you're meant to be surveying. On the second and third dives I had to hover and count fish in a 5m-cube volume of water for the entire length of the jackstay line. Not easy as fish kept popping in and out of the search area and I had to wonder whether I was counting them twice!

One morning we were woken by the dogs barking to discover a full adult turtle had just laid her eggs and was crawling across the island back to the sea! Cameras were out again as apparently this is the first time they witnessed a turtle laying in the two years ReefCI has been on the island.



By the way, did I mention the two resident dogs on the island? Frankie and Princess are



son and mother. Frankie can't get enough of mum and one day we came back from a dive to discover them joined at the loins so to speak. Watching them trying to pull themselves apart brought water to my eyes as well as I think Frankie's. Anyway Frankie has done the deed and we think Princess is now "knocked up". Frankie's dad is Jack and he lives in the house on the mainland. He's just as bad and has a girlfriend up the road where he "sleeps" over regularly.

One week we were asked by CITES (Committee for International trade of endangered species) to be involved in a Conch survey. This transpired to be delegated to two groups, the local fisheries board and TASTE (I don't know what it means). Imagine a group of university student types turning up on site and each has an opinion that needs to be heard. The resulting survey was underwater chaos at its best. Everyone was swimming around at warp factor 6. We had divers falling out of their kit needing redressing underwater, it was mad. Colin and Polly pointed out the errors of their ways and suggested a new methodology and we were promptly left behind on the beach while they shot off to do a very questionable survey.

In the time I was there I would like to think that I became more proficient with my camera. Polly asked me to take specimen photos so they couldn't have been that bad. Towards the end of the trip the weather moved into the rainy season. At night we had the most spectacular thunderstorms I have ever seen! Each day though the seas were calm and the sun came out. On one dive Roland, our boatmen, snorkelled down 20m to us! On another we all took our fins off and had an underwater running race and amazingly I came last!



One bit of extremely good news, I had another go at waterskiing and this time I got up and have video evidence! What a result! I shall bore you all with the evidence in the near future.

I had a great time. I have never done so many enjoyable dives in such a short period of time. This is the type of adventure that you should all have a go at some time in your life and gives you a 10 on the feel good scale. If you are interested in Reef CI have a look at their web site at <http://www.reefci.com/>.

Nigel

And to end this issue on a high note, here's Rico's latest news

New Arrival Bulletin

We are proud to announce the arrival of another potential diver in our midst. Giorgia Elena was born at 20.45 hrs on Thursday 16th November 2006 in an unplanned home delivery. She weighed 7lb 8oz.

Well the story goes, we had been at Queen Charlotte's Hospital until about 4 pm for a check up that day. We were assured that the baby was not quite ready, we came home. We gingerly sat down for dinner at about 6.30 pm. I got ready to go to the Swimarama, the wife mentioned she was in a little bit of discomfort (an understatement!). After dinner. Alex went to bed with a suspected stomach ache. This was followed by, "I think you better call my mother ", and " Do you HAVE to go to the Dive Club?" Within minutes of mother-in-law arriving, the ambulance was called, and reluctantly I decided not to go to the Dive Club!

By now Alex's waters had broken, she was standing in the bathroom, holding on to the side of the bath (thank god for the cast iron). Then two ambulances turned up. The first ambulance crew were Andy and Jane.

Andy (the lucky one) entered the bathroom first and started exchanging pleasantries:

Andy (A) = Is this your first baby?
Alex (W - wife)= No, my second. I think the baby is coming.
A = Please can you move and lie on the bed?
W = No, I cannot move. Baby is coming.
A = How long was your first labour?
W = I hour 30 mins
A = Oh dear!!!
W = (Groan) - Baby is coming.

THUD
WAHH WAAH

A = Oh my god I've got a baby here

Andy opened the door, pouring with sweat, in one hand holding the baby and in the other the umbilical cord, which had snapped on delivery, and he said to me "you've got a little girl - where are the clamps?"

The rest is history.

A big thank you to Ealing Hospital for providing the tea and toast on arrival and also being so professional, the ambulance service and the mother-in-law.

Mother and Daughter are both doing very well.

Myself , in realising that I now have three females in the house plus occasionally my eldest daughter Fulvia staying at weekends, I am devising a bathroom rota so hopefully I can still wash my dive kit in the tub.

Regards
The ever growing Marconi Family.

Merry
Christmas