



Welcome to the first in a new series of CRUD - the St Albans Sub-Aqua Club Newsletter. CRUD exists in order to bring you news of the goings on in the Club - news of the latest and forthcoming dives - training - Octopush - social evenings and so on. In order for CRUD to survive, it is therefore vital that articles on these and other topics are submitted by YOU. The editors have enough on their plate collating and printing the newsletter, so put pen to paper and let's see what you can come up with!

## D.O.'S COMMENT

### The Incident Pit - The ABLJ and Weight

Neutral buoyancy... a certainty, not just a possibility...

This comment is aimed at those of you who've not totally standardised your diving to the same site and same depths for a season - That's most of you! I'm not trying to get my granny to suck eggs, but regarding the more experienced divers among you, I'd like you to agree with the principle and set the example, if not physically then verbally if asked. Thank you.

How many times have I heard (and how many of you think this way), "I don't need to change my weight, I dive with the same amount of lead in the sea and fresh water!"? Trainees, not decrying their enthusiasm, have trouble enough getting their buoyancy right let alone changing the environment they are in! The "real" situation suggests that it will be around 20 dives experience before any trainee will be completely at home weight-wise. This time is due to many factors including suit "break-in", confidence in breathing, dive fitness etc.

So, the explanations aside, please follow these guidelines - I've not made them up myself, we do belong to the BSAC, so let's follow their advice (!)?

On average 2kg weight is going to be the difference between sea water and fresh. Some folks reckon its too much hassle to take off some weights "...just for a dive in Stoney..."

Organise yourselves before you go: no problem. It is best to remove weight from each side of the belt layout. So, at minimal cost you could buy 2 x 1kg weights (or your specific requirements), available through the Club.

Use "H" clips to hold your weights in place - if you've got to remove them this is the best fixing method and your weights don't rip off the end when you hand it in to the boat buckle first!

The advent of the ABLJ has given us mixed blessings. What???

They are a boon to casual buoyancy adjustment, a tremendous supporting device in the rescue and high volume surface support. BUT:-

They are very dangerous if used incorrectly or malfunction - I recall a dive where my dump failed whilst surfacing from 30m. At around 20m I realised I was in trouble but I was on-my-way! Breathing out all the way up, I cleared the water up to my knees before coming to rest with a splash wearing the taught orange bag around my neck, which was as pleased to have made it as I was!

It is the ABLJ that has caused the attitude of no-weight-change-diving - this itself has illustrated a danger in use. You can carry that extra and adjust for it. Correct surface drill encourages dumping air - not all at once though. Invariably too much is dumped so, if the diver is overweight in the first place they have to physically swim to the surface. Here, signals are exchanged which occupies hands and changing to snorkel leaves the rapidly tiring diver treading water for all they're worth! Only that reassuring blast on the ABLJ saves the day!

In Summary:- Weights should be secure but removeable from weightbelts. Before going to a dive site check all your gear for condition and operation, change weights on belt to suit conditions. Remember not to dump all the air from your ABLJ in one go on ascending - control your ascent. Use your ABLJ on the surface. ...and hey! ...Take care down there!...

A final thought. What would you have done? Surfacing off Portland with a trainee. Good control, perhaps a little fast. On surface, exchanged signals, OK. Inflating jackets.. BANG. I felt a thud, trainee moved backwards, looks surprised and promptly sinks! Yes, he wasn't weighted correctly! Proves my point!... Did he survive? See next issue.

Tony Dobinson, Diving Officer

## BETTER THAN SEX

The first official Club Dive of the year took place at the Blue Lagoon on Sunday 13th April. There was a good turnout, 20 divers in all, well outnumbering the locals. Full marks to the Dive Marshall for organising the sunshine, although it did not seem to have made much impression on the temperature of the water. Visibility was surprisingly good for the first few into the water, but soon closed in once the bottom had been stirred up by those overweight with the excesses of the winter lay-off, in spite of the Dive Marshall's threat to re-introduce capital punishment for so-doing. (Isn't it amazing how wetsuits seem to shrink while hanging in the wardrobe over the winter!)

To a self confessed Fair Weather Diver, dives such as this in cold, murky English gravel pits do not appeal. But not everyone agrees. Some divers were apparently in sheer ecstasy after the dive, describing to each other with delight how they managed to make out, through the gloom, the vague outline of a tree stump! One trainee, after completing what was his first open water dive proclaimed, "Great! Fantastic! It was even better than sex!!!"

## FORTHCOMING DIVES

The diving season opened officially on 13 April at Blue Lagoon with the first in a series of regular training dives. (See Better Than Sex!) The dives are intended especially for trainees who want to be ready for the Club Holiday in June, but all are welcome. If you are involved in training and need more qualifying dives or open water training, keep your eye on the notice board.

## TRAINING NEWS

The closure of Westminster Lodge has hit training badly and a couple of school pools we have been offered have proved to be unsuitable. It has therefore been decided to split the trainees into two groups, one training at Hatfield on Tuesdays and the other at Marshallswick on Wednesdays. This arrangement relieves pressure both on pool space and club equipment, and seems to be working very well. The pressure on the instructors is another matter!

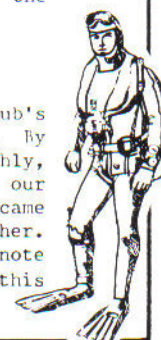
## CRYSTAL PALACE

The BSAC Exhibition and Festival of Underwater Sports at Crystal Palace was well attended by Club members on 22nd and 23rd March. A number of our instructors were involved with the pool demonstrations and "have a go" sessions, and the Octopush team excelled themselves by coming second (to Harlow) on the Saturday.

A lot of plastic cards were flashed on the Sunday - well over £1,000 was spent by Club members on new equipment. We were disappointed though, that the Diving Locker would not offer us any discount on such a large order. Nevertheless a good time was had by all, in spite of the rather unconventional transport arrangements adopted by certain members of the expedition.

## COMPUTER DATING

You will all be aware by now that the Club's membership records are now held on computer. By and large, the changeover went very smoothly, but there was one slight hiccup when two of our members with the same surname became accidentally "married off" to each other. Apologies to those concerned, but please note that we will be making a small charge for this service in future.





## A VIEW THROUGH A STEAMY MASK

It has been reported to me, via a very indiscreet source, that our E.O. is having an extra marital affair with a young lady novice in the club. The person concerned has been seen bestowing her favours on him on numerous occasions. She is said to be doing this in order that she can gain access to his equipment but the question on all our lips is whether or not the young lady is going to transfer her affections to the new E.O. when the present one stands down at the A.G.M.?

Being of a female member of the club I was recently alarmed to discover that we have **only** 17 female diving members, the majority of which are single, whilst there are an inordinate number of men (married single or otherwise). This means that we girls have approximately 8.5 men each which although I think is just about the right proportions, perhaps out of the kindness of our hearts, we ought to be spreading it around a bit more. I think we should have a recruiting drive regarding the young nubile women of St. Albans who are all secretly into wet neoprene. It would make some very interesting gossip!

One of my reporters writes that a Senior Instructor was seen entering a Soho Sex Shop. Was he getting advance material we ask ourselves? Further information would be gratefully received because I would like to know who saw him entering the shop in the first place and what was this Peeping Tom doing in there anyway?

This month's shin-dig was a "Uniform Party". I was rather disappointed not to see any kinky leather wear as I thought that now was the time that any sadists were likely to come out of hiding and reveal their true colours. However this was not to be and all the whips, manacles and shackles remained in the closet, well and truly closeted. However, there were some unusual uses for hiking socks with certain young school girls and frankly I was surprised that they knew what to do with them. Action Man won the prize for the best uniform and I can inform you that it **was** the version that has the eyes that move. There were enough mortar boards and gowns present to make up a university and I was pleased to see that Shenley Hospital let out their chief surgeon for the evening complete with surgical gloves. The evening was rounded off by a strange and mysterious person present who wore a tea towel around his head and looked as if he had walked out of an OPEC summit meeting. Guesses on his identity to be forwarded to the Libyan Embassy because one of their terrorists are missing.

#### ode to the would-be '86 Divers

If you want to go diving  
Then true its up to you  
Just let the training team know  
And these boys are who?  
Auntie Doris and his merry band  
The D.O., T.O. and ...  
Our friend Jeff the E.O. man  
Who loves to fill your tanks  
So if you feel like saying thanks  
We'd know he'd cock a hoop  
But take a tip from all the boys  
We won't land you in the soup  
Nineteen eigh-y six's the year  
The year of mucho dive  
Just give the team a fighting chance  
To bring the scene alive.

Anonymous (and no wonder!...Ed)

#### "Never Assume Anything"

#### Cave-Diving:- Some Home Truths

Imagine you're in Portland Harbour, diving on the Hood, its slack tide, depth only 10m. Finning around the vast hull you find a gaping hole and fancy a look. A quick check of the air situation, good 150 bars and with visions of non-ferrous goodies you fin into the upturned hull, its dark, the water soon silts up, theres nil vis, which way is out, which way is up? Total disorientation, which could very easily lead to your untimely demise...

These problems are the essence of Cave-Diving, which by following a simple code of conduct can be safer than many people first think.

Diving in nil vis and enclosed spaces usually necessitates the diver being alone (if you can't see your Buddy what is the point of having one?) for which there is a "third-rule" amongst Cave-Divers which states that you use a third of your air going in, a third coming out, and save a third in case of cock-ups, as well as carrying a separate cylinder and D.V. in case your air runs out or the equipment fails (what can go wrong, will).

As you can imagine, equipment servicing is very important to the Cave-Diver as even a small failure could be fatal if it happened a long way from base. Some servicing can be done on-site, I have seen divers sitting around fires on campsites in South Wales pulling D.V.s apart like they were opening up scallops on the beach, but generally Cave-Divers are professional in their attitude and very familiar with their diving rigs.

I personally have dived underground all over the U.K. and in Northern Norway, and can tell you that the water is always very, very cold, and the best sites are always the furthest from the road. There are however in this country, some huge sumps with gin clear water that we use for training novices, and which provide ideal introductions to the world of 'Subterranea Britannia', in an environment which allows us the room to guide trainee's along the tunnels and around the galleries that make up these the remotest dive sites in the country. ....Interested?

by Mick Earle (Diver of the Caves)

