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**Manta Mag** Spring 2004

Welcome to the new look Manta Mag, with me, Jools, your new look editor! This is my first ever publication so forgive me if it doesn't follow the traditional format.

When I joined the club way back in '60, very few people had access to the internet, email, websites or mobile phones, or car phones as we called 'em then and this mag was an important communication and reference book.

So when I first sobered up after accepting the mantle of editor, I wondered if the rag was still either relevant or wanted. "Nah! you don't get out of it so easily" they said.

"At least do two a year" So here's the first of the new bi-annual, all colour Manta Mag. Enjoy. Now how am I going to get this released?

*Jools*

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## Back Issues

AS the title suggests, back issues is the bit on the back page where I get to raise a few issues! Firstly, thanks again to all contributors without whom... etc. So, if you want to hear less from Mick and Grahame next time, then get writing!

Wot about this subs rise then? Can anyone remember when it was 2s & 6d? £9 a month, you couldn't go swimming four times for that... and this mag thrown in too! So if you know any active member still only paying a fiver, then throw bananas at them! Well, that's all for now, see you all next time!

*Jools*

# Manta Mag

## Official B.S.A.C. 953 Magazine

- Highland Special
- what's up yours?
- photo comp
- subs up 1st time in 50 years!
- shocking stories inside!

# Winter 2004/5

## Welcome Back to *your* Manta Mag

And what another action packed edition it is too. Like some other older members of the club, I haven't done as much diving this year as in some previous years, but I have been to Scotland twice, firstly in April to St Abbs (bbrrrr!) and secondly to Lochaline in August with half the club! Therefore it is only fitting that this edition be the Highland Special.

Lochaline deserves a special mention as the club highlight of the year, not least because of the superb diving, but also the sheer size of the expedition and the now legendary mid week party where we met the lovely Roxanne and finally got to see (in appallingly graphic detail) what a Scot keeps up his kilt! A big thanks to Caroline and Jeff for the organizing.

At the recent AGM, we saw many fine photos, the best dozen of which were selected for next years calendar. By happy accident, there were six above and half a dozen below water including one of each judged to be the overall winners. One of the original dozen - entitled "Dive Ninja Drip Fed Sake" submitted by Dave Banana, was considered unsuitable for inclusion, so you will find it published between these pages.

Anyway, lots of new features this time round along with some old favourites, (and I don't mean Mick and Grahame!) so read on and enjoy.

Keep the articles and photos coming for the next edition, planned for late spring.

Stop Press: thanks to Banana Dave for the Manta Xmas bash - full review in next edition.



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## saga cruising

for the over 50s

Are proud to announce its new line in coastal cruises aboard

## Wave Chieftain 2



For the old and decrepit

The vessels specialist equipment include

1" Vinyl covered cushions to save embarrassment

2" Ample storage for Zimmer Frames

3" Oxygen carried as standard

4" Packed lunch specials (Mashed Banana and Prunes

5" Pension Vouchers to accumulate Sea Miles

**Richard Tibbs**



The Skipper says not all old people are useless and boring so  
i dont mind taking the good clean ones out.

So dont just sit there waiting for god  
enjoy a trip out with Richard and us,

**SAGA COASTAL CRUISES**

## The Manta BBQ

Being unable to attend this event due to a prior commitment, I asked those who did attend for their comments. This is what you said:



**Tom:** 5kg of scallops!

**Jeff:** Don't ask me, I don't remember a thing!

**Chi:** I didn't actually see the incident.

**Veneta:** It wasn't me! I had nothing to do with it. I

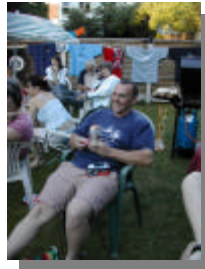
was off duty.

**Helen M:** It all happened so quickly!

**Alastair:** I was in Madiera!

Well, I hope that clears everything up then, no pun intended Nicky.

Thanks to Cath Shafto for the photos!



## Photo Comp Winners

Red Sea Reef by Caroline Brown and Dirty Divers entered by Jeff Cleary, taken by his lovely lady, Helen



As voted for at the A.G.M.

# Page 3



## A big hello to Roxanne, Manta's first page 3

Roxanne's hobbies include propping up the bar, chatting up the lads and cadging free beer from the landlord, seen here smiling for the first time in 40 years!

Roxanne (21) likes to keep things close to her chest and her personal history is a bit of a mystery but she was snapped here keeping abreast of things in the Lochaline Hotel bar.

Have you seen Roxanne? - take a pic and send it in!

## D.O.'s Drivels

Your D.O. is grumpy.

"Nothing new there then" – you think – "He's *always* grumpy; he's Mr. Grumpy personified. OK, let's humor him; what has got his goat this time, like we actually care?"

I am grumpy 'cos I have done precious little diving this year. I have done a total of 20 non-training dives; that's right, twenty. And half of those were in Scotland. It's not if I haven't tried to go diving either; I have. I blame the weather gods, particularly the god of wind – too many trips have been blown out this year. Of the trips organized with the RIB, a possible 10 days diving, I have dived on 2 of them (and coxed two others) – 6 of the other days have been lost to the weather. Even in Scotland I 'lost' 2 dives since I decided not to dive on the last day. Can't blame those on the weather; on the previous two days I had not been entirely with it. Diving in a complete daze is not healthy.

However, my point is that I have done less diving this year than I did the year I smashed up my back and lost half a year's diving. Nicky tries to tell me that it is not all about number of dives. To a point I agree with her, but diving is my passion, even after 23 years, so I get somewhat peeved if I can't do it. Next year had better be an improvement on this one; otherwise I will have to consider live sacrifices. Humph, Hurrumph.

So... have I got anything good to say? Um, yes, actually I have. I really enjoyed Lochaline (so many thanks to Caroline & Jeff), also Lyme Bay & Exmouth (in-spite of a rather exciting ascent on the first day). My favorite dive this year has to be the Ashforth, off Brighton; superb day; fantastic wreck. That one has to be re-visited.

Lots to look forward to for next year. The dive plan for 2005 is coming together, trying for a similar mix of diving as was planned for this year – RIB, hard boat, general diving, deeper stuff for those who are geared up for it. Training for next year has not been discussed yet, but over the winter period we will finish off the dive leader course we have been running and we are going to run an Advanced Diver course. I take the view that advanced

However the highlight of the tour in terms of culinary skills must be the visit to the unique King Balti in Eyemouth-unique in that it has the audacity to call itself a restaurant. The fact that we had to wait for about 2 hours for our food and when it did arrive it was cold led to a revolt by the group.



We decided that not only was a tip unwar-ranted but also that Caroline should be volunteered (because she is tall) to tell them off. Maybe we should have eaten at the pub on the caravan site with the dodgy looking barman.

St Abbs is a wonderful place to dive and I would definitely go back but next time it will be in the middle of the summer so I don't have to subject myself to smash and grab tactics at Esso garages for plastic gloves.

Veneta

### Caption Competition



- Bren:** Mick wishes he'd saved his viagra for later  
**Hartley:** Mick notices his pee valve has backed up!  
**Andy Z:** Andy and Matt just about realise that rigor mortis has set in. Post-dive, Mick tries to remember where he left his teeth Mick lets one go and tries to blame a bad fill  
**John T:** Has he fallen asleep and dropped his cup of tea?  
**Jool s:** Someone's shat in my reg!  
**Paul D:** Mmmmmmmmm I 'm sure I had "Twin Tens".....

## The Quest for St Abbs and the Battle of King Bal ti

For the second May Bank Holiday Caroline kindly organised a 4 day trip to St Abbs which as most of you will know is definitely north of the Watford gap and nowhere near South Mimms service station (for all of you who have the same sense of direction as me- don't worry Jools and Bren I thought it was somewhere warmish like Cornwall too).

The trip up north was very long (almost 8 hours) but I was cosy in Andy's 4x4 and stuffed myself with M&Ms and Yorkie bars and caught up with all the trashy showbiz gossip in *New and Now*. The hard nuts amongst us stayed in surprisingly nice caravans on a site which had a pub on site with a rather odd looking barman who had a physical deformity that I subsequently couldn't find in any medical textbook when I got home- strange that.

Anyway St Abbs is a very beautiful part of the country and the diving was great if not a tad chilly. Caroline's idea of using service station plastic gloves under our diving mitts was ingenious but seemed to become less effective as the days went on. Peter the skipper was an archetypal jolly sailor with a fine belly to go with his hearty laugh. He was proficient at getting us to all the best dive sites which included one where we all sat on the bottom at about 10 metres and looked up in awe at the cormorants dive bombing us from above, absolutely wonderful sight.

We were joined one day by Jack who was about 70 years old and had been diving along that part of the coastline for almost 50 years. He explained that when he first started to dive around St Abbs there was only him and his three buddies and 4 other guys from Newcastle who dived there. He reassured me that the coastline had not changed too much in that time which had something to do with the fact that St Abbs is a voluntary marine reserve which most people respect.



divers don't really mind diving in the depths of winter.

Enjoy the 'off' season, and may your requests to Santa for lots of diving toys be answered.

Grahame

## **Psychedelic Sea Critter of the Mag.**

### **Reef Cuttle Fish, Great Barrier Reef, Australia.**

Again, taken from *Fish Face* by David Doubilet and published by Phaidon.

This really is a good book full of truly amazing photos.

There would usually be a photo of the D.O. here, but I think you all saw enough of him in the last mag.

Besides, I think this reef cuttle is far prettier. Remember anyone can nominate their sea critter of the mag.

Once again for Reef Cuttle Fish —more dives than Graham P.



## Chairman's Chunders

As another Christmas approaches I can't believe the dive season really is over – my last dive was at the end of September. But then, I managed nearly 60 dives so I guess I can't complain too much. On one of my many jaunts to the O3 suit shop in Weymouth this year they happily reassured me that the diving in December can be really good! The old wives are already saying it's going to be a cold winter – hopefully no wind - maybe we should break the habit of many years, break out the thermals, and actually do some diving when weather permits – just needs volunteers to organise or people to come with me!!

For me the year was the usual mix of day and weekend trips together with the club holiday to Lochaline in August and another holiday in Antigua, during which I was forced to do the odd dive. The UK dives included many of the old favourites (including the Kyarra 4 times – by the way, did I tell you I found a gold watch??), revisiting many wrecks I haven't dived for a while as well as a few new ones to the club. This also involved me diving with at least 12 different buddies with the number of dives that I started with Mr Cleary being significantly in the minority – and, yes we did finish all our dives together. The regular trip we did miss was to Plymouth which was a shame as we are usually guaranteed excellent dives, but we did manage Exmouth instead which brought back good memories. As for the best dives of the year, this has to be reserved for Lochaline and, particularly the Hispania which, I must say, was even better than I remembered from a few years ago. This has to be one of the best wrecks in the UK – just a shame it's in Scotland – we get Mark, they keep the Hispania!!

We have seen a good number of new members join this year which is always good to see, as well as a good level of training – good news considering we have no permanent Training Officer and that the role has been covered by many members with much support, cajoling and hard work from Grahame, alongside his Diving Officer role.

As reported in my last 'Chairman's Chunders' we finally took possession of our kit room at Tooting Leisure centre, for which much thanks goes to Jeff for his persistence.

when the tow rope broke for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time.

This time, we chanced upon a stranded (small) rib off Kimmeridge bay with engine trouble. They had a group of young fresh-faced novices aboard looking slightly glum, & I vor promptly lashed them to the side of his tubes & swept them up the inlet. Ooer missus.

Finally, I vor went in search of his 'unknown' wreck, in shallow water somewhere near the Black Hawk. He knew very little about it, not even having dived it himself, but another skipper pal had told him it was a good dive, & we were all willing to give it a go.

A damn fine dive it turned out to be, a smallish, well broken up steel wreck, with dense shoals of the classic bib & pollock, lobsters under plates, soft corals & gorgonians in abundance. Swimming over a tangled pile of metal pipes, we saw the back 4 feet of a nice fat conger looking like a very shiny pipe, but we couldn't find his head at all! Just off the bow on the bottom we startled a thornback ray hiding in the sand. Looking under a plate we saw rows of neatly laid egg sacs hanging down resembling water-filled condoms. Yes you all know what they look like don't pretend you don't.

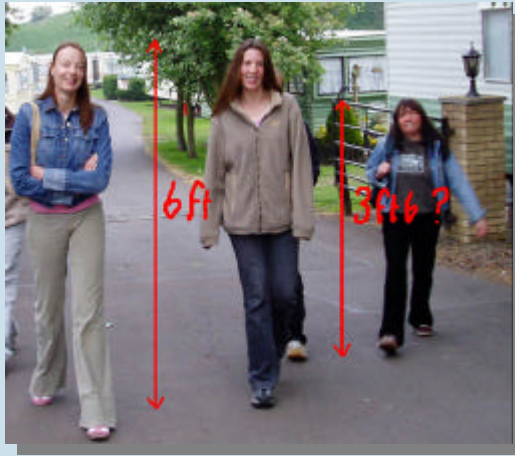
In short, a classic British wreck dive, in shallow water (<20m), on a fair day in August, with nearly 10m viz. It doesn't happen often enough, but when it does it's still a great pleasure and keeps you coming back for more.

Bren (a.k.a. the Beast of Mull)



From the windows of our digs we spied this strange beastie, revving up and billowing clouds of smoke. We went out to enquire further. It turns out that this restored WWI amphibious landing craft is to be put into service as a dive boat next year! So imagine being picked up from your hotel in this and literally driven to the dive site! Ed.

## The Incredible Shrinking Bren!



The question this photo begs is "Has Bren shrunk?"

Never the largest of people, has this diminutive Kowloon diver diminished further?

Given that Caroline is known to be in the region of 6ft tall, does this mean that our Bren is now only 3ft 6in? Is this the result of too much haggis?

The second, and until now, unasked question is "why is Caroline wearing one dark and one light shoe?" Is this some strange Scottish custom?

## Ivor's No Tank Engine!

It's always eventful when you go out with Ivor on his big rib Protector, out of Portland Harbour. This time, we were staying across the road, so didn't have to tussle with the 4x4s for parking space, offloading their tekkie twins & rebreathers, although we seem to have enough of those in our club these days, taking up all the deck space, they've only been qualified 5 minutes, even the pikey boys have them, grumble grrrr....Mind you they still suck air like Angus Deayton sucks .....well everything.

The 1<sup>st</sup> time with Ivor, the Portland coastguard did a practice helicopter landing on us, that was fun. They then hopped onto a nearby fisherman & liberated a lobster from him, I bet it was surprised to be 'rescued' in style.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> time (not quite as much fun), Ivor was forced into towing two rich divs on a twin engine pleasure cruiser who had run out of fuel on the way back to Weymouth. Not the most patient of men, he did treat us to some colourful olde worlde west country language



I don't intend singling out all committee members for comment as the usual thanks were given at the AGM. However, I think a special note does need to be made of the significantly healthier position of the club finances under the management of Caroline. As usual much hard work has been done by all the committee, as well as some non committee members, over the last year, for which I am very grateful.

The AGM in 2003 raised various questions about the constitution of the committee and whether a review was needed of the current posts and their responsibilities, the proposal being that the committee made its' recommendations to this years' AGM. A paper was prepared and discussed at committee meetings during the course of the year, resulting in a recommendation to the AGM that no changes were needed at this stage. The prime reason for this was that, whilst all members are free to attend committee meetings, it was felt that we wanted to encourage as members as possible to participate in the management of the club and this is best achieved by making available committee posts.

Despite the success of the year, looking forward there are customary concerns to be addressed and, whilst it may seem that some of us keep going on and on,

- the RIB is not used enough all it takes is a 'phone call to any member of the committee - you are guaranteed a dive for you and your chosen buddy
- the same old people organise all dive trips - odd that, same solution as above!!
- we pay good money for the pool at the Leisure Centre so please use it, particularly over Winter to keep those diving skills up to date

Well, I guess that's it for another Chairman's Chunders. Whilst we saw no changes in the committee this year I hope the challenges of 2005 will be fully met so that, along with the membership as a whole, we can continue the success of the last year.

Mick Johns

-crikey! Not enough room for a photo...Never mind! - Ed

# Norway Diving Expedition with Jack Ingle

After all the preparation, the travelling, the long walk down to the boat (10m) Chi and I finally managed to get diving. Hurrah!!!!!!!



Monday Dive 1: "Riddervold" Freighter: This was our warm up dive so we headed off to 42m and a total dive time of 52 mins. Start as you mean to go on!!!!!!!

Dive 2: "Konsul Karl Fisser": This wreck was a troop ship and as it was our 2<sup>nd</sup> dive obviously not as deep. So we only went to 42m for a total time of 39mins. We did have a some-what longish surface interval. Honest!!!!!!!!!!!!

Tuesday Dive 3: "Konsul Karl Fisser": Back to the "Fisser" for our 3<sup>rd</sup> dive. About 15m vis and 11deg, this is what wreck diving is all about.

Dive 4: "Iris": This was to be our shallowest dive of the week, 33m. Excellent dive as still intact, although lying on her starboard side. As there is no current and not much tide you can kick up a fair bit of Silt so Good Buoyancy control is definitely an advantage. This one ended up being a night dive, a bit strange doing a night dive so deep but we were on hols :)



Wednesday Dive 5: wreck outside the harbour, "Rimage" was an excellent dive went from 45m-60m we headed to the bow first where we saw a wolf fish. The stern section was all blown open and bullet holes all along the hull.

Dive 6: Iris again..... But I went walkabout instead. Well the weather was fantastic and I

wanted to see a bit off the spectacular scenery, as you can see from the photo's.

Thursday Dive 7: "Iris" again. As the weather had taken a definite turn for the worst, (well we were in Norway so I shouldn't have being surprised) we

fields of jewel anemones carpeted the undersides of rocks. Lobsters guarded cracks - just look at the photos!

The next morning and our mill pond had turned into Hawaii as huge breakers smashed against the shore. Strangely, the waves preceded the wind by 24hrs. Either way, diving was out for the rest of the week so we took to the mountains. Mad villages cling to the peaks and scary roads wind round them. Prehistoric standing stones litter the island half hidden in fragrant groves of olive, eucalyptus and cork oak. Wild boar roam the woods and wild boar featured in the restaurant menus - delicious, rich and so tender it melts in your mouth. Tortoise wander the roads like animated stones and eagles patrol the skies. We did plenty of walking! For the more hardy, Corsica is home to the famous GR20 hiking route - 168km of demanding trail, up and down peaks, some stretches requiring the intrepid hiker to carry three days worth of food and water! We didn't attempt it!



I shan't bore you with a day by day account of our holiday but the town of Bonifacio at the southern end of the island has to be seen to be believed. The old town, a Genoese built citadel, is perched on the top of sheer cliffs best appreciated from the sea, whilst a narrow gorge in the cliffs (where Ulysses meets the Laestrygonians in the Odyssey) carries the sea around the back of the town to the marina.



If you like big hotels and nightclubs and crowded beaches, don't go to Corsica. The island is asleep by midnight. There is little public transport and the rare cabs cost the earth. If however, mad mountains, prehistoric ruins, postcard villages and superb diving are more your bag; put Corsica on your list.

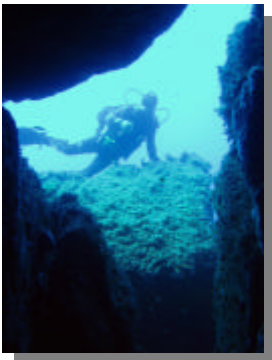
## Corsica

Bren and I were scratching around looking for a last minute (.com) holiday this September when I glanced at Dive magazine .... Corsica, Sardinia and Sicily. Hmm, Corsica looked interesting and neither of us had been there before. A few clicks later and we had it - a beautiful cottage with private beach overlooking one of the most picturesque bays on the island, the Golfe de Valinco, 15 minutes by car from Propriano, car hire, flights and transfers. Brilliant.



Days later, looking down from 10,000ft, this wild and mountainous island surrounded by clear blue sea swung into sight - looking good. Corsica is an island, about half the size of Wales nestling in that corner of the med formed by France above, Italy to the right and Sardinia six miles from the southern tip. French owned now, but in the past owned by Italy, Goths, Saracens, Greeks, Romans and even British for two years under George III. However Corsica retains its own proud national identity symbolised by the Moor's head found on everything from wine bottles to buildings and its own language, with the French often painted out on the bi-lingual sign posts!

Enough history - back to the holiday. We dumped our bags, grabbed our snorkels and went exploring the rocks at the end of the beach. Within minutes Bren had found an octopus which dashed across the sandy bottom and tried to merge with the rocks. I dived down for a closer look. Pussy didn't like that, he flashed electric blue at me. Damm, we had left the camera behind in our hurry to get wet. Never mind.



On our second day we drove into Propriano and booked ourselves a dive out in the bay from a one man band operating from a small yellow pre-fab at the sea front. For 35€ we bounced over the bay in a RIB to a site where a granite rock broke the surface. The vis was great, about 20m, the underwater topography fascinating - huge boulders to swim round, over and under. Shoals of fish large and small accompanied us and

went back to the Iris. As we were now doing this in almost daylight, it was raining after all, we could see so much more. For a ship that went down over 60 years ago it was still remarkably intact, wooden decking that was still where it was on the day it was sunk, toilets, showers and bath's still in place, and without much imagination you could just see the crewmen going about their duties.

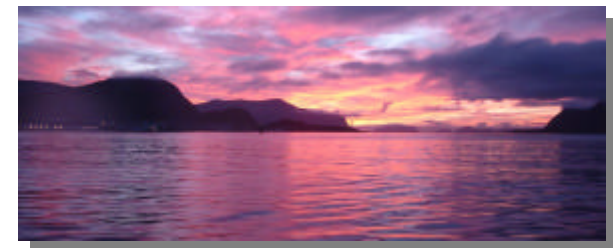


Dive 8: "Barcelona"...missed!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Well not technically true, in true Manta tradition the shot was on the wreck when we jumped in, but by the time we got to 45m it had drifted off!!!!!!!!!! Well who are we to argue with the "Local Skipper"

Friday Dive 9: "Barcelona" This time the shot was where it was supposed to be, and boy; were we glad. This wreck was truly amazing. Very much intact with everything still where it should be. Portholes with the glass still in them and still attached to the hull. Suitcases still in their rooms with shoes, clothes and children's toys strewn around the cabins by the passengers as they scrambled to abandon ship before she sunk. This was a troopship that was carrying German troops and supplies and also some of the officers families. Unfortunately it was now time to leave so we reluctantly started our long slow ascent with plenty off deco time to think about all the cracking diving we just had over the last five days.

Norway for me was one of the most memorable holidays I've ever had, with some of the most amazing wreck diving and scenery you could ever want to have in a holiday. Looking forward to going back in the near future, (2006), and if anyone else is interested just let me know.....

Paul D.....



## My best dives of 2004

The 2004 dive season, whilst ending far too soon, produced some excellent dives for me – some new and some old favourites. The following are the highlights of my season.

### Kyarra

This is a wreck that many of us have dived on many occasions over the years and my experiences of it have previously been very mixed – you have to get the tides right and sometimes the visibility can be terrible. It is a very large wreck which was sunk by torpedo in 1918 in Swanage Bay. Dived this wreck 4 times this year and, despite its size and the fact it can be difficult to identify in parts I really felt that, by the end of the season, I could navigate around sections knowing roughly where I was going.

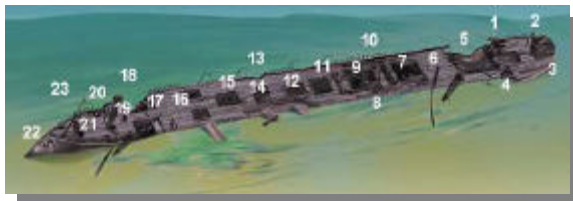


For those who haven't had the opportunity to dive this wreck, it was a passenger liner converted to a hospital ship, carrying a very large quantity of general cargo and, despite the time it has been on the seabed being battered by currents and plundered by divers, it can still yield a lot of interesting things.

My experiences of the 2004 Kyarra dives were mixed from dark in March with a few fish but still yielding a nice bottle, to excellent visibility with loads of perfume bottles, tiles and feeding bottle teats. The same day we visited the same spot on the wreck, finding sheet music and a gold watch. By way of contrast, the last dive of the year on the Kyarra at the end of August was not good - terrible visibility, strong currents and nothing to be found. .... Can't wait for next year.

### Salsette

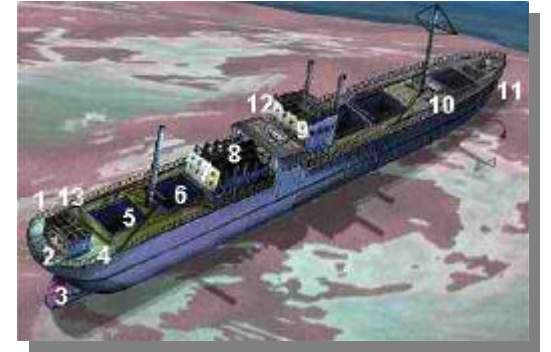
The Salsette is one of those wrecks that some of us have dived quite a few times but many will not have had the pleasure because of its depth.



structure. From here you can work your way down the wreck inside until eventually you find the bows flattened out at the seabed. This was the first time I have reached the bottom and must say it is quite a disorientating wreck - most wrecks are roughly horizontal, not vertical. Also, as the wreck lays almost vertically against a rock face, there are areas where you can swim under the wreck between it and the rock face – a little intimidating having all those tons of rotting ship above you.

### Hispania

The Hispania has got to be my best dive of the year and I dived it twice with Alastair. Again, apologies again to all those of you who also dived this wreck this year.



What makes this wreck so good is that it is very much intact, only 70metres long, so the whole wreck can be covered in one dive, and has loads of swims through etc. Both of my dives involved a tour around the wreck, under the stern and back up to the top and through the holds.

The bridge and cabins are easily accessible as are the walkways alongside the superstructure. Even better, there are at least 2 ways of getting into the engine room, allowing access to both the upper level and, if you squeeze around the engine, down another deck level into the bottom of the wreck.

And, as for the worst dive of the year – well that almost certainly goes to the Clan McVey which I dived back in March with Peter, diving off the club RI B. My logbook shows the following comprehensive report – “Jeff missed the wreck with the shot – nothing but sand so didn't stay”.

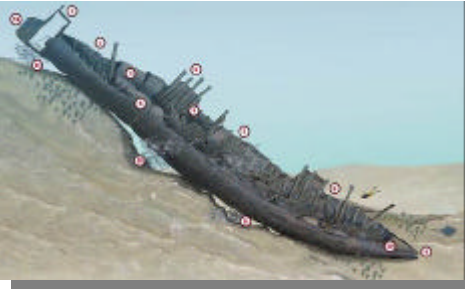
p.s. Sorry, forgot to mention the brilliant dive in Antigua with Peter when we saw 3 large Nurse Sharks and the most enormous Stingray.

p.p.s But then, I might be doing the Moldavia on 19<sup>th</sup> December – thanks Chi

Mick

(Mick's best dives, continued from earlier)

This year Alastair and I dived this wreck twice, the first to 37 metres and the second to the bottom at 50 metres. For those who haven't had the opportunity to dive this wreck, it lies almost vertically down a rock face, starting at less than 6 metres and finishing in a crumpled mess at 50 metres.



Whatever the depth, this can be a very disorientating wreck, made worse by the depth of the bows - but it is a

wreck that must be done if you can. The shallowest part of the wreck is the stern just below the surface. When you reach the wreck you find the stern with the rudder and the propeller shaft tube, with the rock face that the wreck rests on disappearing below you. Going over the top of the wreck takes you to where the decking was with various bits of wreckage and super-

I must say that, having now dived the Salsette on a number of occasions, it definitely is one of my favourite UK dives. Whilst lying on one side it looks exactly what it is - the wreck of a luxury liner, being pretty well intact and with large sections of the wooden decks still to be seen. Despite carrying a rich O2 mix to reduce the significant decompression time, I have never managed to do the whole wreck in the space of one dive - this time the shot line was near the stern giving Chi and me the opportunity to explore the stern area and large propeller shaft. We continued the dive following the wooden decking and into the stern holds. The dive was then concluded by following the slanting main deck up to its shallowest point at the deck railing, then doing a long deco stop - especially diving with Chi!!

### **P555**

This is the wreck of an American submarine sunk for sonar practice. Therefore, there is no real damage, just a complete submarine sitting on the seabed at 43 metres. I have dived this wreck a couple of times before with very mixed fortunes - both in very strong currents and one of those with a seriously contaminated air mix - not much fun on a deepish wreck in a strong current. This time conditions were perfect - hot weather, good visibility and slack water.

Now, the P555 may be little more than a steel tube sitting on the seabed but it is in excellent condition with loads to see and small enough to go round at least twice if you are prepared to do a reasonable decompression stop. The conning tower is still very intact and usually has loads of congers hiding in its' holes. Most of the exterior hull is still intact, the rear fins still in place and the torpedo tubes shut.

Whilst the P555 is an excellent wreck, it isn't the best submarine I've dived - that honour goes to the U260 in Southern Ireland - it was good to do the wreck under excellent conditions and thanks go to Jeff and Mark for keeping me alive.

### **Rondo**

Now, I know that many of you have dived the Rondo, particularly this year in Lochaline. I have now done this wreck 3 times, the first time in 1996 when I recall I stopped at about 30 metres.

(let's take a break and join Mick's best dives later in the mag)



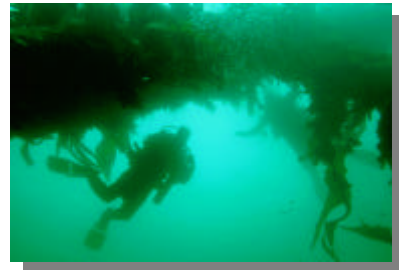
# Lochaline - a Story in Pictures



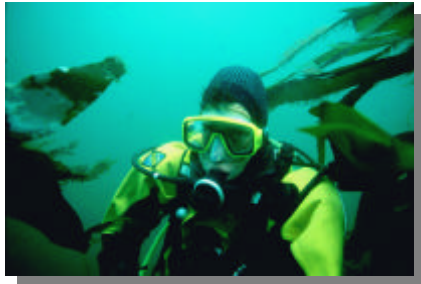
1) The only way is up!



2) Our house, in the middle of ...



3) Wild life ...



4) Wilder life ...



5) First sighting of the Beast of Mull



6) "I'll nip ye A will, och eye the noo"



7) The Party



9) Tobermory



8) Dive Ninja Drip Fed Sake

10) Crew B

## Photographers:

Grahame: 3, 4 & 6

Jools: 2, 5, 7, 9 & 10

Bananas: 8

