



Bovisand A Trainee's Perspective March 1999

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Trip Report by Ida Lister, CD Trainee 1998-9

After Shaun and John (the Driver) had managed to rest the minibus from Kenny's we set off an hour and a half later than planned. The Panton was NOT grateful for our extra custom as we waited finding us continually in the way, even so far as to remove a chair from under Emma's descending rear as she supposedly blocked the fire exit. We promptly got stuck in various traffic jams, expensive Welcome Service breaks and Plymouth Sainbury's (lingering in the chocolate section as omnivore Dan and his 54p sausages did battle against a vegetarian regime). We arrived at Fort Bovisand, driving past eerily lit battlements before lugging kit up a winding road judged too treacherous for the inferior turning capabilities of the minibus. We collapsed into damp and musty (to our as yet refined noses) beds though this was alleviated by the cheery deco - blue bunks, tastefully covered with stylish duvets sporting suns and moons and set against a deep ochre background.

Saturday morning we were up, bright eyed and bushy tailed happy bunnies no less if slightly apprehensive and meeting George, head BSAC instructor for our group, who gave us instructions about proceedings. We then went to the kit store to collect kit from the "well insulated" kit store overseers and to inspect the lock ups where kit was stored overnight. I became persuaded that the keys for these lock ups had a secret ambition of their own: to investigate as many people's pockets as possible, jumping from one pocket to the next at the slightest opportunity so that they were never where expected. Once kitted up and on the quayside, we were dealt into groups of four students per instructor - the latter being George, Ross and Ted. The first dive was simply to experience cold seawater and repeat basic skills (mask clearing, neutral buoyancy and DV removal). Happily this went without a hitch despite much struggling with leaky dry suits. Mary attained the hard-earned status of dry suit expert having, during the course of the trip, tried a record 7 dry suits before one of a non-leaky stature was secured. Jessica and Nicola followed hard on her heels. A second dive at 6m, with a little more exploration around the harbour under low vis conditions was undertaken after having our cylinders refilled, one of Ted's pair, Tim and Jon, even fitting in a third training dive.

Logbooks were filled out and signed, as became customary, in the Bovisand Bar, which was adorned by mysterious relics of the Bad Lads divers. Tom, J-hon (Kermit), Phil Rae and Devin then undertook a night dive (much excitement at free chemicals in the form of green sticks from one of the kit store overseers) with expert surface cover from John Driver, Mary and Ida. Mild to moderate alarm was experienced as the team moved over to a rocky area, surfaced and then surface swam backwards into areas rich in foaming water and jagged rocks. However surfacing reasons were later explained to be due to extremely low visibility. <cough>

After preparing a DELICIOUS tomato-bean pasta source (who put the baked beans in??) it was discovered that the cooker was incapable of frying a 54p sausage, let-alone heating a ton of source. Pizza was ordered for a bargain price at the bar or a feeble microwave with a frazzled plate rotator, used to heat sauce for eating with tasty toast. We plumped into bed, musty smells and dampness lost in oblivion.

Sunday, us "crazy kids" (- George) were down in the café for free tea and toast and a briefing, before getting kit on the boat and meeting Glenn the Skipper, a master of crude innuendo and mildly male chauvinistic remarks (e.g. Glenn: Best way to train for AV is ugliest bloke and prettiest girl, followed by a classic from Emma: so do you dive?). Another gorgeous day (nil to one eight cloud cover) as we steamed out of the harbour and dropped a shot line at Le Poulmic (a mine sweeper that had exploded in the process of doing it's job). The dive here was our first experience of deeper diving with a max depth of 20m and a repeat of the basic skills practised in the harbour. After returning for kit lugging and tank refilling we went out to sea again to Tinkers Shoal, for a shallower dive (15m) and skill practice, including SMB use, mask removal and CBL's. Instructor Ted had been noted for his hardness as he dived without gloves and was honoured with the nickname 'ard bastard Ted. His students acquired a certain 'ardness as they were "persuaded" to dive without gloves, finding to their surprise that it wasn't too bad.

We were too late for a third dive and were returned to solid ground much to the relief of Nicola who after accomplishing successful dives had been dropping digested remnants of breakfast and lunch overboard at intervals.

After logbook completion, last night's sauce was heated and pasta cooked in an alternative kitchen accompanied by discussion about arrangements for bladder relief when staying at depth for greater lengths of time a P valve was shown courtesy of Devin, examples of nappies and catheter being unavailable.

Monday for most if not all the club diver trainees was the best day. Enough air was loaded onto the boat for two dives. During loading of the boat much mirth was generated by sight of Shaun, who had enthusiastically taken a refreshing plunge in his dry suit, trying to clamber back in to the boat. Sadly a camera was not available in time! The weather was even better than Sunday, the water calmer and clearer (vis:7m), confidence levels were on the up and responsibility for the dives was laid in the hands of the buddy pair with instructor watching. Navigation exercises proved more difficult - Ross didn't know whether to swim after Nicola or Emma as they created a V formation along their respective bearings. The sites of Glenn Strath Allen and Cannon Ball Alley were dived with depths of 10-15 m. The former had a boiler and a bow of a ship, the latter yielded a cannon ball to Ross and shot to George, who temporarily "ignored" his students to dive down into rock crevices for

the small balls. We were however delighted with this treasure which was dealt out as our club diver records were signed in the bar - we were now only a stamp away from the long awaited club diver status. In the debriefing, George complimented us on our skills and complimented our pool instructors on the efficacy of their teaching considering that few of us had done any other dives before entering the sea. CHEERS! (<vbg> - Training Officer)

Much debating was the entered into as to dinner - to eat or not to eat Chinese? Yes you guessed it, well it was that or Sainbury's potato and leak soup and rice. The Chinese also provided an excellent serving of fish and chips. Cocktails in the bar followed dinner: handy tip; Sea Snake is a must for the cider/lager addict - ask Emma!

Tuesday, minibus inhabitants got themselves packed in by 8.45 am (impressive or what?) and bobbed up to Cambridge dumping Tim at the wayside in Wincanton in preparation for his field trip.

Altogether, from a CD trainee perspective, a darn good holiday and lets do that diving thang!