

Turtle News

Issue 14
February
2005

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Playing the Sounds of Mull	3
Society News	4

Forthcoming Trips and Holidays

- Portland February 12-13
- Swanage & Portland March 25-28
- Red Sea Wrecks Live-aboard March 25-April 1 £920
- "Tycho", Brighton April 29
- Swanage April 30-May 2
- Red Sea Landbased, Safaga. Optional tour of Luxor & the Valley of the Kings May 13-20 £569
- "City of Waterford", Brighton May 13
- Plymouth May 28-30
- Farne Islands Aug TBA
- Oban Sept TBA
- Red Sea Extravaganza, M.Y Valerie. Abu Nuhas to St John's Reef October 7-21 £1625

Big Brother on Little Brother

Eighteen people, a huge pile of baggage, copious amounts of alcohol.....and something called 'Big Brother'. No, this wasn't the Channel Four production, but a party of Adventure Divers heading for

'The Brothers Islands' in the Red Sea. This was to be my first time on a liveaboard as well my first visit to Egypt. I also hoped it would be my first (and not my last) time diving with sharks! As the aircraft descended, the landscape

appeared barren and inhospitable. After a 20 minute minibus ride through Hurghada we reached our home for the week, the luxurious M.Y Valerie. The following morning, after stocking up on the necessities such as food and fuel (not forgetting the beers!) we headed off to Gotta Abu Ramada for a check-out dive. We also practised making negatively buoyant descents from a still moving zodiac. This basically involves sucking all of the air from your

BCD, followed by a very short warning from the skipper, before rolling in and finning down like f**k to get out of the way of the boat. Interesting!



A night dive followed and I mused on how nice it was to leave the drysuit and hood at home and still be warm. Despite this, the pink fluffy bathrobe which was wrapped around me by the crew as I boarded the boat, was still very welcome. Sorry lads..... it just wasn't your colour! An overnight journey found us at Big Brother and we awoke VERY early to the sound of engines, a wildly rocking boat and the shout of 'Briefing!' from

Kimo, our Egyptian dive guide.

Our first dive at Big Brother gave us more than a taste of the strong currents prevalent in the area and rapidly convinced us of

the futility of attempting to swim against the flow. The marine life however, was getting better and better and the day was rounded off with a very scenic dive on the wreck of the Numidia, a British cargo ship which ran aground on 20th July 1901. She now lies in an almost vertical position at the northern end of the reef. With her bow in 10 metres of water and her stern at 80 metres, she makes a very pretty dive for all abilities. Her railings, mast, davits and deck winches are still intact and are covered with a vibrant profusion of hard and soft corals. A set of railway engine wheels which were carried as deck cargo, remain in place close to the
(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

bows. At this point, I was still desperate to catch sight of my first shark and although one or two had been spotted by the others during the day, I was to be disappointed. That all changed in the evening, when several liveboards had been moored close together and I looked into the area between them to see an array of large, white tipped fins cutting the surface. All I had to do now was jump in the water with them!

A subsequent day spent diving around Little Brother did not disappoint and I hung motionless in midwater as a white tip reef shark cruised beneath me. Many more sharks were spotted as the day went on, including the sighting of a large thresher. We experienced a bit of bother trying to swim against some very strong currents to reach the shark infested north plateau, and one or two people learnt about down current the hard way! Not to be outdone, the reefs we visited over the following days put on a superb display of the most stunning, colourful marine life I had ever seen. Surface intervals were spent poring over ID books working out what we'd spotted.....huge gorgonian fans, Napoleon wrasse, barracuda, moray eels, blue spotted stingrays, colourful parrotfish, tiny damselfish, nudibranchs and an upside down jellyfish to name but a few, and in Gareth's case, fossilised corals and Fuberitic rock samples, which led to many an impromptu geology lesson!

Some of the dives saw our illustrious leader in playful mood as he tried to push one or another of us towards a particularly vicious looking moray eel, but others managed to create their own amusement AND entertain the rest of us at the same time.

Mr Murray for instance did a spectacular impression of a Polaris missile on the end of his SMB! (Sorry John.... but it was funny!).

The second half of the week saw us move to the Elphinstone and Panorama Reefs and by this time I was clocking up my longest dive times to date. The navigation hadn't improved much, however, and I still hadn't managed to find the way back to the boat without help! Between dives we relaxed in the Valerie's comfortable saloon or enjoyed the sun out on deck. The food was good and

plentiful and we were looked after by the ever smiling (and ever farting?) Fares. Evenings were spent watching beautiful sunsets followed by a cold Sakara at the bar, or up on the deck beneath the most amazing starlit skies where entertainment was often provided by the 'odd couple', Uncle Bob and Cabin Boy.....Pete, you are going to make a great wife.....does Diane know what she has let herself in for?!

All too soon it was our final day of diving, but one I had looked forward to since the start of the week. We were to dive a wreck I had been keen to visit since seeing some stunning photos at a dive show....the Salem Express.

This was a large roll on, roll off ferry, which sank close to midnight on 15th December 1991 after hitting a reef off Safaga during a storm. She had been carrying pilgrims returning from Mecca and had set sail with at least 690 passengers, of which tragically, only 180 survived. The collision with the reef caused a gaping hole in the forward part of the hull and caused the huge stern door to open. The ship sank within minutes and the lifeboats, which could not be launched in time, lie upright on the seabed at 32 metres alongside the wreck, together with numerous pieces of luggage and large amounts of sheet metal, which formed a sun screen above the upper deck.

I had been suffering from problems with my ears on the previous day's diving and so was relieved to find that when we dropped into the water that they had decided to behave. The whole shape of the wreck, lying on its starboard side, could clearly be made out below, as the port side lies in only 12 metres.

Diving the Salem Express is quite a strange experience, knowing that the remains of many of the unfortunate passengers are entombed inside. It is however, an amazing sight, lying as it does in one piece and in superb visibility. With such a lot to explore, we spent a

relatively long time at depth, resulting in this being my first decompression dive. It certainly taught me a thing or two about decompression procedures, although the ten minute stop on the way up wasn't too onerous.....the view of divers ascending from the wreck below through rays of sunlight was a beautiful sight. Almost like angels....except this lot were all wearing Scubapro! Is

there anyone in the club who HASN'T been sold an Everflex by Ray yet?!

Suddenly it was our last dive and we kitted up on the dive deck once again to the strains of James Brown and 'I feel Good.....!'

A very gentle drift along the reef at Ras Abu Soma rounded off the week nicely. Even so, this dive turned into a bit of an epic and I managed to clock up 92 minutes underwater. Is this a record? Am I developing gills?!! I even managed to find the boat on the way back!

The journey back to Hurghada was complimented by massages all round from Fares, and yet another huge meal, during which Fares revealed his secret weapon, his fart machine, which had kept us amused over meals for many days, although I think most of us had assumed it was Beaver.....

Not content with one massage, we all headed for a Turkish Bath, during which some concern was expressed by the masseur about Beaver's deep green foot, which had mysteriously appeared after one of the midweek dives. Having convinced him that we hadn't all just disembarked from a plague ship, we crammed into a minibus driven in typical Egyptian style, for a mystery tour around the backstreets of Hurghada, a meal, and then beers at a local bar. The evening was completed with lessons in smoking a shisha pipe and drinking fragrant Arabic coffee- a very chilled fashion to end such a fantastic holiday. And yes, we did 'Feel Good.....!'

Article by Sarah Corrigan
Pictures by Ant



Bluespotted stingray



Klunzinger's soft coral

Playing the Sounds of Mull

What better way to spend the first Friday of October than cramming 5 divers, 8 gear bags, 2 suitcases, 1 laptop, 1 camera bag, 2 rucksacks and a holdall into a hired Volvo estate? Couple this with a dodgy sat-nav, some half-decent tunes on the radio and the academic delights of the PADI Enriched Air Course, and you have the makings of a real diving adventure! 100 miles later we tumbled out of the car to find we had 20 minutes to kit up and be on the rib!!

Our first dive was the "SS Breda", a casualty of a German WWII bombing raid. Conditions were not great, and the surface current was wild. Unfortunately I got swept off the shotline, and my subsequent struggles, forced me to abort the dive. I dragged my bedraggled body out of the sea, and promptly froze for the next 45 minutes. The others returned to say that the visibility was poor, and that I had not missed a truly memorable dive- I still felt gutted for getting up at 4:30am and not being able to blow bubbles! By the time we reached the second site, a drift in Ard-na-Cuille Bay, I was so cold I could hardly move. I watched miserably as the happy troops disappeared below the surface again. At least this time I had company as Sarah was also too cold to dive. By all accounts we missed a scenic dive, with terraced ledges full of squat lobsters, urchins, dogfish and, that rarest of beasts in British waters, an octopus!

Back at the Puffin Centre's chalets, Sarah and I hatched a plot to hijack the shower first. The fiendish plan worked brilliantly, but for one minor detail- no hot water!! Sadly we had neglected to turn on the immersion heater in our hurried bid to go diving. Colder, but cleaner, we headed into town to explore the local pubs and bistros, setting the trend for the next few evenings- how many single malts are there in Oban, and how many could we get through in one sitting?!

In the pitch darkness of the following morning I regretted my offer to cook

breakfast, but slowly and surely the smell of frying eggs and bacon roused the Neanderthals, who, one by one, surfaced and tucked in. Then a sickeningly organised Ant shouted, "Come on everybody! Lets go diving!!"

After a lumpy crossing in the comfortable, but sedate "Urchin", I found myself about to take the plunge again. Sheer panic kicked in and I prayed to the sea-gods, begging them not to force me to abort another dive. 2 minutes later I was halfway down the shotline, with a wonderful feeling of calm descending over me. Ant and I were the first pair down, and the visibility was fantastic! The "Shuna" in the Sound of mull was a riot of colour and was packed with fish. It was nice to be on a relatively intact wreck and be able to make some sense of the looming underwater bulk.

By 3:30pm I wasn't happy! I'd got very seasick in the "Urchin", and was now concentrating hard to prevent myself throwing up in my regs as we drifted towards Duart Castle. Back on the boat, Chris hadn't had as much luck. One big ocean, one little boat- how did he manage to miss the sea?! Ant, however, had been very productive, and was like a man possessed as he scrambled around filling his goody-bag. He collected so many scallops I don't know how he got them back to the surface! Back at the chalet, Bob and Chris commandeered the kitchen and soon the aroma of white wine, garlic and seafood was wafting through the house. We all enjoyed a delicious hors d'oeuvre fresh from the sea. Then everybody tried to make it as difficult as possible for me to pass my Nitrox exam. Noisy rabble!

The morning saw us on the "Rondo"- what an excellent and colourful wreck! She lies

almost vertically on a cliff face, with her stern in 10m and her bows down at 50m. A garden of plumose anemones festoons her current swept hull, and loads of fish swim busily around the wreckage. At 18m there is a rather tight swim through

between the cliff and the wreck, but the silhouette of a diver in the gap, framed by orange and white anemones is stunning. Our afternoon dive was a most amusing (non) drift, pretty much on slack water. Kim and I seriously thought we were lost, but when we surfaced amongst a forest of SMBs, we knew nobody else had found the drift, and our reputations were saved!

That evening, the Irish bar provided haggis, Aberdeen Angus steaks, and whisky all round. The accompanying headaches, pouring rain and crashing thunder of the next morning, cut our merry band from 11 to 5. Half an hour

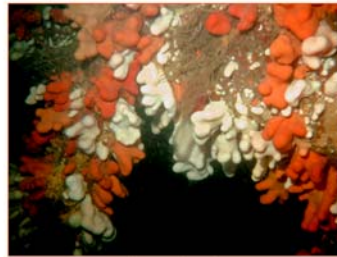
later the rib raced out over flat water under clearing skies- bunch of light-weights! The trip was worth the effort, as the "Thesis" was crystal clear and covered with orange and white dead man's fingers. A lot of the ship's plates had

fallen away, leaving a skeleton of spars that were brilliant to dive through. We then returned to the "SS Breda" for our final dive. As I had missed this wreck on Friday, I was really pleased to get the opportunity to bury my demons. Once again the visibility was terrible, and wasn't helped by Chris and Darren rummaging around in the silty holds! Kim and I lost Ant 5 minutes into the dive, but figured he'd be okay as he was buddied with his camera. He found us 10 minutes from the end, only to have us desert him at the bottom of the shotline as Kim was low on air. It was quite funny really- everytime he turned around we had disappeared!!

The afternoon found us offgassing at the Oban Distillery, before trawling the town for souvenirs. Memorably, Jonathan misplaced a hired weight belt, which caused much hilarity, and just a little embarrassment on his behalf. It's funny how aeroplane seat belts resemble weight belt buckles, and how bad jokes go down like lumps of lead!!

What a trip! What a fantastic group! Where are we going next?!

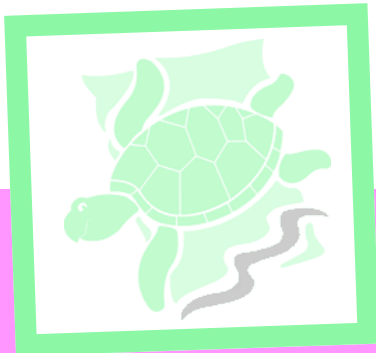
Article by Kirsty Devereau
Pictures by Ant



Dead man's fingers



Plumose anemones



Adventure Divers
 241 Bullsmoor Lane
 Enfield
 London
 EN1 4SB

Opening Hours

Mon - Fri : 10.00am to 6.30pm
 Wed : 10.00am to 8.00pm
 Sat : 10.00am to 5.00pm
 Sun : By appointment only

Phone: 01992 650 674
 Fax: 01992 650 747

E-mail: scuba@adventuredivers.co.uk
 Web : www.adventuredivers.co.uk



Society News

Welcome to 2005! We trust that you will all enjoy a fantastic year in the water and continue to have fun safely! I'd like to thank Lesley for all the blood, sweat and tears spent in ensuring that Turtle News has become such a high standard publication.....big footsteps in which to follow! I'd also like to thank Hinna Collins, without whom the last issue would never have gone to press!

The Annual Dinner and Dance was once again a great success, thanks in no small part to the efforts of Ray, and Liz Letch, as all those who stayed until the wee hours can confirm. A special mention must be made of Mark Ayling who won the award for Services to Adventure Divers (anyone not seen the new website yet?). The prize for the Most Improved Diver was hotly contested, with Tony McNally narrowly missing out to Paul Woolley! Once again Beaver was the Most Travelled Adventure Diver, while Uncle Bob won the award for services as a Divemaster. Jo Richardson made the successful bid for the auctioned holiday to Sharm, and enjoyed the diving, and New Year festivities with the rest of the hooligans who descended on the Sinai Peninsula after Christmas! Of course, this period was overshadowed by the terrible events in the Indian Ocean on Boxing Day. Our hearts go out to everybody affected, but especially to all those in the diving community who suffered in the tragedy.

The Society has a busy schedule planned for the year ahead, with trips both at home and abroad. The annual Easter trip is to the Northern Red Sea, diving some of the world's most famous wrecks from our old friend, the "Valerie"- as we go to press there are only a few spaces left on this most luxurious of liveaboards. The jewel in the crown this year is undoubtedly October's Red Sea Extravaganza, taking in sites from Abu Nuhas to the Brothers and the Elphinstone, the Salem Express, Daedulus Reef, Rocky Island, Zabargad, the Fury Shoals and St John's Reef. This extraordinary trip covers some of the best diving I have seen anywhere in the world. It promises to be the ultimate Red Sea experience- book now to avoid disappointment!!

The new website is running successfully, and from February 1st, the Members Area will be operational. With a chat room, buddy-line (where you can find somebody to play with in the water!), photo and video galleries, and e-mail links, we hope it proves popular with our members. Visit the site to check details of forthcoming social events, such as a Night at the Dogs and the Riverboat Disco. Please don't forget to submit your contributions to Turtle News- the newsletter is only as good as the articles you send me!!

See ya in the blue! Ant.

Courses

- Advanced Open Water**
 - Orientation 24th March
 - Open Water 26th & 27th March
 - Orientation 21st April
 - Open Water 23rd & 24th April
- Dry Suit Specialty**
 - Orientation 17th March
 - Open Water 26th March
 - Orientation 14th April
 - Open Water 23rd April
- Enriched Air Nitrox**
 - Academics 21st March & 18 April
 - Open Water 27th March & 24th April
- Rescue Diver**
 - Commencing 16th April
- Emergency First Responder**
 - 10th & 17th March
 - 9th April
- Divemaster**
 - Commencing 31st January
- Assistant Instructor & Instructor Development**
 - Weekend and midweek courses at ANYTIME by arrangement.

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

Picture Perfect

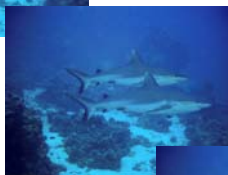
There's no doubt that digital cameras have made underwater photography accessible to all- now

award winning images, and then make some of your own!! Your logbooks will never be the same!! Why not try out Fuji's new Finepics F810 in the pool, and then manipulate the results during Chris' workshop?



learn to get the very best from *your* pictures. Chris Hands' excellent Photoshop CS workshops will teach you about colour management and manipulation, file handling, bordering, layering, including text, getting rid of things you saw and adding some you didn't! You will see how the pros create those

CONTACT RAY OR DAREN AT THE DIVE CENTRE FOR DETAILS OF THE NEXT PHOTO SHOP WORKSHOP



And then there were two!