

# Turtle News

Issue 12

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## Diving Das Böt

### Forthcoming Trips and Holidays

- Oban Sept 4 - Days - £175
- RIB Diving Week-end 11th & 12th October
- Shark Diving Bahamas October - From £1,150
- Red Sea Wreck Week Liveboard November - £825
- Red Sea, New Year Party Week - £516
- Red Sea, Sharm El Sheikh - May 2004



The skipper had timed slack perfectly, ensuring that my descent into the emerald depths was little more than effortless freefall. Expectations were high and my enthusiasm to reach the bottom of the shotline was only tempered by a twinge of apprehension ... at 46 metres this was not an insignificant dive. A squirt of air into my dry suit to ease the squeeze and another into my wing to alleviate the burden of the twin 10s, I

slowed my descent and waited for my buddies to catch up. At 30 metres I could just about make out the dark shape of the wreck below. The visibility, at 15 metres plus, was perhaps the best I had experienced in UK waters and the near perfect surface conditions ensured that there was plenty of ambient light. A sharp tug on the line above indicated that my buddies had arrived and we continued downwards to the eerie wonder

below. At about 37 metres the full splendour of the conning tower loomed into view and I was struck by a sense of history that was almost palpable. This was my very first dive on a submarine and so far it was not only meeting but comfortably exceeding all my expectations. The German U-boat U-260 was one of the last enemy submarines to be lost to the Allied anti-submarine campaign during  
*(Continued on page 2)*

**Christmas Dinner & Dance**  
**Saturday 6th December**  
**Tickets £30 - On Sale Now**

(Continued from page 1)

the final stages of the Second World War. The official story suggests that on 12th March 1945 she became lost somewhere off the South Irish coast. Whilst travelling underwater, about 20 miles from Fastnet Rock, she was damaged by an explosion at her bows, attributed to a contact or antenna mine. Managing to surface, U-260 headed for shore but after several hours she became unmanageable and her captain, Klaus Becker, who was in radio contact with U-boat command, was ordered to scuttle his vessel. The crew put to shore in rubber dinghies. All 48 of them survived and spent what little remained of the war in a military camp in Kildare. However, as I chatted to Jerry, our skipper, on the way out to the dive site, he told me that there were actually quite a lot of conflicting testimonies, many of which appeared to offer a more valid version of events. I was instantly intrigued. On the echo sounder, Jerry showed me what he thought could be the real cause of the U-260's demise. A pinnacle known as '78 Rock, sitting just south of the wreck site and rising from 50 metres to within 15 metres of the surface (which, coincidentally, is about periscope depth for a U-boat). '78 Rock gets its name from the fact that it wasn't charted until 1978 and therefore Captain Becker would have blissfully unaware of its existence. In addition, Jerry said that the sub simply didn't appear as though it had struck a mine. I looked at him quizzically ... "don't worry" he reassured "you'll see what I mean when you get down there".

Jerry's words hung in my mind as I checked my computer to see how much time I had to explore. Despite the 28% nitrox mix in my cylinders, in just 8 minutes time I would be past the no decompression limits, the surface would no longer be my friend and the monotony of deco stops would loom. I adjusted the valve spring tension on my regulator to reduce the inhalation resistance that becomes increasingly apparent at these depths, took a deep breath and pressed on.

The conning tower is, without a doubt, one of the most awesome underwater sights that I have ever seen. The radar loop is intact and one of her attack periscopes is extended (adding weight

to Jerry's theory) and still watertight after more than 50 years. Peering through the Zeiss optical lens it is possible to make out the various brass gears and prisms that were used to operate this masterpiece of engineering. The main escape hatch is open, providing not only a conspicuous reminder of the circumstances surrounding her demise, but also a rare glimpse into the cramped accommodation, now tenanted by conger eels and blanketed in silt. On the port side of the conning tower



lays a particularly interesting and historical item. In the 1930's a German engineer called Hellmuth Walter suggested that submarines could run more efficiently if air from the atmosphere was introduced and expended from the diesel engines via a vertical air-mast. In addition the use of such a device meant that the U-boat could stay submerged for much longer periods of time, thus avoiding enemy detection. The German Chief of Naval War Staff supported Walter's idea and in June 1943 the first air-mast, which later became known as the Walter Snorkel, was produced. The U-260 was one of the very first vessels to be fitted with a snorkel and today it can still be clearly seen, folded away on her deck at the time of her downfall. Conscious of the time and my diminishing air supply, I head east towards the stern. Although the wooden decking has long since rotted away and some of the outer-hull plating has decayed, revealing the curved inner pressure hull beyond, she is still remarkably intact. Rounding the stern, the starboard propeller, shaft and guard

makes in impressive sight and through the rusting outer skin you can just make out the form of the stern torpedo tube. I am reminded of a scene from the film Hunt for Red October as I hover motionless trying to take it all in. A signal from my computer tells me that I have now entered the virtual overhead environment of decompression; it is time to move on. I swim steadily along her 66 metres length to investigate the bow and hopefully find some answers to the many questions that still surround the fate of the U-260.

He bow is clearly damaged but appears to be crushed rather than exploded. The four forward torpedo tubes and severed hydrovanes are clearly visible and one of them contains the remains of a torpedo. Jerry was right; it certainly didn't look as though she had stuck a mine. Whilst I am certainly not an expert on explosives, one would have expected a mine to have caused substantially greater damage, especially given that at least one of the torpedo tubes was presumably loaded at the time. The U-260 begged further scrutiny but unfortunately time would not allow and I was conscious of the fact that every minute I spent at depth would call for many more minutes of decompression. Passing over several compressed air tanks, used to control the U-260's buoyancy, I made my way back to the conning tower for one last look at the periscope and snorkel that will hopefully remain as underwater monuments to the genius of men like Walter and Zeiss.

With the boredom of decompression



eventually concluded, I broke through the calm surface into the glorious mid-day sunshine and breathed deeply on the fresh sea air. It had been a stunning dive.

Words & Pictures by Mother

# Sheikh, Rattle & Roll

The flight to Sharm el Sheikh takes about 5 hours but it was a highly entertaining 5 hours, thanks in no small part to the copious amounts of red wine that Ray was consuming. Touching down in the arid Egyptian desert, it was scorchio, imagine everyone's surprise therefore, when one of the party happened to mention that she was wearing thermal socks! Does anyone that remembers that ridiculous TV show with the sock? Well, hence a new nickname was born ... Lamb Chop ... and so early in one's diving career.

The following morning all the dive gear was packed into boxes and transferred to our dive boat, New Maestro. With all the kit on board, two dives guides (Alan and Islam) assigned to watch over us and one exceptionally hung-over leader, we set off to our first dive site; Ras Katty. The briefing for the first site was pretty straightforward. Islam would help with weighting and then we would split into two groups and go diving. Usefully, the dive guides also had methods to attract our attention underwater. Alan had an underwater horn and Islam had quite possibly the world's most infuriating rattle. This was a nice easy check-out dive. It was also the first open water dive for our two Open Water students Liz (a.k.a. Lamb Chop) and Pauline. The dive was a shallow reef with plenty of life; glass fish, banner fish a spectacular lion fish and a lovely blue spotted ray. By this time however our own Ray was exhibiting more of a green tinge and seemed grateful when the days diving reached its conclusion. The next day we took the plunge at Temple. Again another relaxed dive and we had the privilege of seeing a monstrous moray eel. I was attempting to complete my Photography Speciality and discovered that even with the extra weight to compensate for the ally tanks I had little control over my buoyancy! Taking pictures is not as easy as it may appear! I started to take a few shots of the moray, but I obviously wasn't doing it right. I was happy to learn from my tutor Ray, although when he grabbed the back of my tank and shoved me face to face with the eel, I was beginning to think that maybe this photography lark was not for me! That evening we made our first night dive. We marvelled at the lion fish feeding in out torch lights and a beauti-



Tales of Deep Penetration in the Engine Room

ful turtle that was unfortunately too far away for me to get a good photo. Although it probably wouldn't have mattered much, as my photography skills had reached what could only be described as a very early plateau.

The beauty about reef diving is that it allows you to observe a huge variety of marine life in a relatively tiny area. Over the next few dives we were blessed with more blue spotted rays, tuna, puffer fish, parrot fish, damsel fish, clown fish and many others that I couldn't possibly name. However, every holiday has its hazards ... currents, marine life and one that anybody who has been to Egypt will probably be familiar with ... the ravings poohs!! Unfortunately a few of us were suffering with this affliction, and so you can imagine our horror when, deciding to stay on the boat overnight in order to get an early morning dive on the Thistlegorm, we realised that, for the next 2 days, there were only going to be 4 marine heads between 21 of us!!

On the way out to the Thistlegorm we stopped at Jack Alley, named for the schools of Jack fish that frequent the waters, and then on to Ras Mohammed and the wreck of the Yolanda. Although the wreck has long since slipped off of the reef and into the abyss below, her cargo of Armitage Shanks toilets, basins and baths makes a unique underwater sight ... but unfortunately provided little comfort for those with the three-penny-bits. That evening we moored and dived at a beautiful sight called The Lonely Mush-

room - named not for its hallucinogenic properties but rather its shape which, (surprise, surprise) closely resembles that of a mushroom.

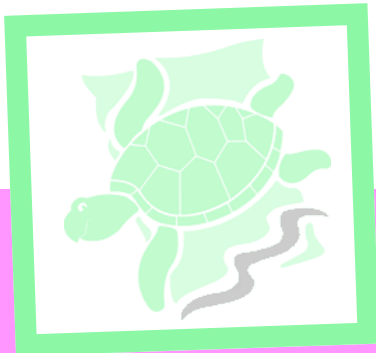
Finally, the next morning we arrived at the legendary Thistlegorm. I was excited about diving this historic wreck and pleased that we had arrived early, although we were not the only boat there and by the time we surfaced from our first dive many more had arrived! The Thistlegorm has a certain ambience about it that makes it a real pleasure to dive. The bikes, trucks, munitions, intact propeller and fore deck all adding to the atmosphere.

On our final day we were in for some of the best diving yet. At Woodhouse Reef we encountered a lovely white tip reef shark but typically I didn't have my camera on this dive.

Our very last dive was to be on the wreck of the Million Hope. The conditions are not always kind enough to dive this particular wreck, so we were very lucky. Dropping down to the propeller we then swam along the starboard hull towards the bow. Beaver and I made our way inside the wreck. Here we discovered crustaceans in the shower rooms, a school of hatchet fish around the bridge and my buddy could hardly contain his glee when I became entangled in some electrical wire. I eventually freed myself, no thanks to Beaver who by this stage was howling with uncontrollable laughter. Recomposed, we made our way into the engine room; with some apprehension I followed my buddy down into the darkness. I had never experienced a deep penetration like this before (*Errr, maybe you would like to rephrase that Lou? ... Ed*) ... it was truly amazing. I had my camera on this dive and managed to take some pretty good shots ... my photography skills were slowly beginning to improve. This was without a doubt my favourite dive and I would like to thank my buddy, Beaver, not just for looking after me on the Million Hope, but also for a great weeks diving.

Many thanks to everyone in the Group who made it such an enjoyable trip: Beaver, Pete, Uncle Bob, Sarah, Lamb Chop, Pauline, Neil, Brett, Daren, Tax Man, Swedish Slave, Mike, Steve, Ben, Sarah, Mario, Graham, Jim and of course, Touché the Brave!

Words and Pictures By  
Lou "The Cat" Dalton



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**Opening Hours**

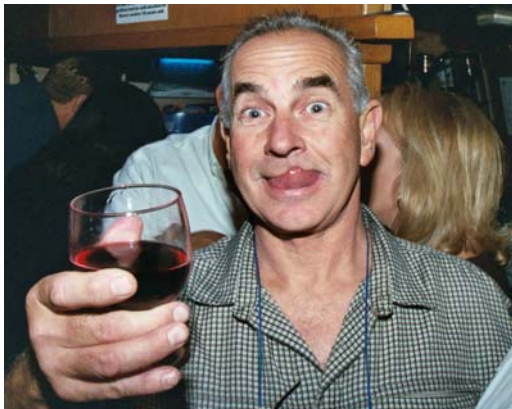
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# Society News

It has certainly been a long and very hot summer, providing some of the best diving conditions that we have seen for many years. The RIB has been running regularly and we have enjoyed some fantastic weekends down at Swanage. The



**Would You Buddy Breath With This Man ?**

weekends away have provided the opportunity for some healthy social interaction between society members. However, the Riverboat Party must surely take this summer's social prize. It was a huge success, the boat was full and by 10 o'clock it was most definitely rocking. I'm sure that many of you will now be excited by the prospect of witnessing our illustrious leader in a semi-paralytic state twice a year. It was good to see so many old faces as well as new ones amongst the crowd and the turn out bodes exceptionally well for the forth-

coming Christmas Dinner & Dance. We are already taking names and deposits for the Dinner & Dance, which this year is on Saturday 6th December once again at the Enfield Townhouse. So don't delay gives us a call and book you place, it promises to be our best ever.

We have been busy on the training front and a special mention must go to everyone who endured the trials and tribulations of the Rescue Diver Course on the hottest day of the year. We must also welcome a new Instructor to our ranks!! After many hours spent burning the midnight oil in an effort to fathom the physics of diving, Chris Christou passed his Instructor's Exam with flying colours. Well done also to Daren Davies who surprised everyone, including himself, with an exceptionally strong performance on his Assistant Instructor course.

Looking ahead, if you're thinking of some late sunshine, we still have a few places left on the Red Sea Wrecks week and don't forget the New Year Party week. With over 25 places already booked it promises to be a great week. Finally, A big **CONGRATULATIONS** to Dave "Ding Dong" Bell and Amanda "Sturdy Bird" Tyrer who announced their engagement earlier this month, which just goes to prove that all of this social interaction is having a positive effect.

## Courses

- Advanced Open Water**
  - Orientation 23rd October
  - Open Water 25th & 26th October
  - Orientation 20th November
  - Open Water 22nd & 23rd November
- Dry Suit Specialty**
  - Orientation 20th October
  - Open Water 25th October
  - Orientation 17th November
  - Open Water 22nd November
- Enriched Air Nitrox**
  - Academics 23rd Oct & 20th Nov
  - Open Water 26th Oct & 23rd Nov
- Rescue Diver & Emergency First Response**
  - Academics 24th, 25th & 30th October
  - Pool 23rd, 25th & 27th October
  - Open Water 26th Oct, 1st & 2nd Nov
- DAN Oxygen Provider**
  - 28th October (Evening Only)
- Divemaster**
  - Commencing 11th November
- Assistant Instructor & Instructor Development**
  - Weekend and midweek courses at ANYTIME by arrangement.

## Congratulations

- Open Water**  
 Thomas Brady, Oliver Buxton, Mat Tyrrell, David Allan, Colin Steele, Colin Ridout, Mark Sheppard, Lawrence Evans, David Thomas, Meena Khare, Barry Mason, Gary Mason, Vicky Beasley, Daniella Allen, Natalie Howard, Simon Thornton
- Advanced Open Water**  
 Gary Watson, Brian Watson, Alan Mair, Walter Buchgraber, Paul Low, Paul Gumble, Oliver Buxton, Andrew Postill, Simon Thornton, Victoria Beasley
- Dry Suit Specialty**  
 Gary Watson, Mario Garcia, Lisa Palmer, Danny Lowe, Brian Watson, Colin Steele, Hazel Brockhurst, Alan Mair, Oliver Buxton
- Rescue Diver**  
 Gary Watson, Jimmy Jewel, Paul Low, Victoria Soloviev, Louise Dalton, Peter Barrett, Scott Seary, Sturdy Bird
- Divemaster**  
 Steve Groome, Gemma Williams, Peter Stanning
- Assistant Instructor**  
 Daren Davies, Daniel Benhaim
- Open Water Scuba Instructor**  
 Chris Christou, Francesco Zancanaro

TO BOOK ON ANY OF THESE COURSES OR FOR ALTERNATIVE DATES, PLEASE CALL RAY, LESLEY OR DAREN