



COTSWOLD 40th ANNIVERSARY NEWSLETTER

Many of you will be aware that we celebrated our 40th anniversary in 2009, and what a year it was! To set the scene, Cotswold 332 had its first meeting on 22nd April 1969 with just 12 members – the minimum at the time required to form a BSAC branch.

The founder members were:-

Mr G T Skuse – Regional Coach
Mr E W J Mills – Chairman
Mrs E Birch – Secretary
Mr K Chandler – Treasurer
Mr W J Woodmason – Diving Officer

Mr C M Mauler, Mr D Morgan, Mrs N L Skuse, Mr N Birch, Mr R J Smith, Mr J Wilson and Mr F C Woodward.

Since 1969 we have grown, changed and evolved to become the branch we are today – 55 members strong!

You may be interested to know that a lot of other good things also happened 40 years ago, such as:-

- Neil Armstrong became the first man to set foot on the moon
- RMS QE2 entered service
- Robin-Knox Johnston became the first person to sail round the world solo without stopping
- The first Concorde test flight was conducted in France
- Ann Jones won the Ladies' singles title at Wimbledon.
- The first transplant of the human eye was carried out
- APPANET was created (the predecessor of the internet)

If you want to find out what else was going on back then just check out the internet – need I say more?!

To bring us right up to date with Cotswold, here are some of the things our members got up to during the anniversary year.

Annual Dinner – Nicola Foxe

The 40th year of Cotswold BSAC kicked off with a blast at the annual dinner, the first of many exciting events to celebrate our anniversary.

This year, not only was the dinner moved to a bigger venue, former club members and familiar faces were invited back to join in the celebrations. The new venue, Sheepscombe Village Hall, was the perfect size to host the 50 guests and was decorated elegantly in red and silver in honour of our ruby anniversary.

Mike Turner, who was our Chairman during the anniversary year, said: “The success of the club has been testament to the hard work and effort members have put in over the years. Since the first committee meeting back in 1969, the club has come on leaps and bounds but we wouldn’t be here without the members and this year really is for them.”

On arrival, guests were greeted in the bright reception area, presented with a choice of welcome drink, and guided through the great double doors, to the dimly lit main hall where low lights twinkled on the table decorations.

Throughout the evening, fundraising took place for the club. Not only was a quiz held before the meal, a raffle was drawn after, followed by an Auction of Promises. Prizes of all shapes and size were awarded from chocolates to paintings, designer-jewellery to adventure experiences. The generosity of the dinner guests raised an astonishing amount of money for the club.

The Awards for 2009 were presented to the following members:-

Diving Officer’s Shield:	Paul Bowman
Chairman’s Plate:	Dulcie Adams
Members’ Award:	Paul Cooper
Most Prolific Diver:	John Rudman
Diver of the Year:	Richard Holder

Celebrations and chat carried on long into the night, with long-standing members catching up with former members, and former members getting to know the newer ones. Finally, as the last star twinkled and the last song was played, the guests bid one another goodnight.

Most prolific diver 2009: JR



Birthday Dive at Cromhall Quarry – Nicola Foxe

It was March. It was cold. It was gusty and it was grey. But spirits were high and the divers' smiles could brighten any day! Ah, those deranged, crazy smiles! You could just imagine land-lovers' thoughts: "What! 5 degree water and you can't see up, down or all round?!?!?! What are you thinking?! But, like people possessed (or maybe like all cold water divers) we very happily kitted up, took a deep breath and submerged ourselves in another world.

Some were training. Some were diving for fun. Some were diving for eggs. Yes, eggs. Some of those crazy fools (they will remain unnamed lest they are committed) had dived in before anyone else and planted hard boiled eggs around the quarry. Well, it was Easter after all and there was an Easter egg in it for the lucky treasure hunter! Robert Marx, eat your heart out!

And some, you might say the sensible ones, stayed warm and dry by the BBQ.

Almost 40 club members and families turned up that day. It was an early start. We met at 9 a.m. and planned two dives for the day. The schedule was to buddy up, plan the dive (and dive the plan) and surface for a breather before going down again.

My first dive was cold, dark and I could only just see my buddy even though he was less than five feet away. But it didn't matter. That's the thing about diving. It gets into your heart. The serenity of being underwater – the quiet is truly something to experience. And when we surfaced, after experiencing 7 minutes of murky serenity, I was ready for a cup of tea.

The crowd had gathered by then and the wind carried the laughter across the quarry. I joined in the party and soon it was time to take a dip again. At least visibility was slightly better this time but I still couldn't find any eggs. Instead, when we had dived our plan, my intrepid buddy and I surfaced and braved the biting wind to transform from creatures of the deep and join the hungry, exhilarated masses.

The BBQ was roaring by the time we got there. Squeezed underneath the awning were the divers. Burgers and biscuits, hotdogs and hot tea were in abundance and everyone had their fill.

Some time later, we came out from the shelter to take a club photo for the scrapbook. After several attempts we stretched our backs, cracked our necks and stood up straight again. The day was over and we were all homeward bound. It was undisputable. It had been a great day. Despite the wind and the cold, we had seen our club's birthday in with style and had got the colds to prove it!



Maybe next year, we'll find those eggs ...

Dive Fest 2009 & Porthkerris – Dulcie Adams

The first BSAC Dive Fest event was held in May and was welcomed in by some of the worst weather we could have imagined. Rain, rain and more rain! Sadly a lot of the diving was cancelled because of the weather but that did not stop some intrepid British divers taking to the water – as you will all have seen from the reports in Dive magazine.

Visitors who didn't want to take to the depths of the ocean were able to enjoy many interesting talks on dry(!) land. Monty Halls was there to regale us with his diving tales as were representatives from BSAC, the Shark Society and many others.

Some of the more athletic divers held a drysuit-clad cricket match on the beach – this was probably nearly as much hard work as trudging up the hill after a dive at Thurlstone! It was a good excuse for a pint though and no surprise that the bar nearly ran out of beer!!!

After Dive Fest, a few Cotswold members continued to holiday and travelled to the Lizard, where they were greeted by lovely sunshine and a warm welcome from the friendly team at Porthkerris Divers. A splendid two weeks were spent soaking up the sun, socialising and doing some diving from the Kitten, Porthkerris' new boat. We could not have asked for more!



Andy from Porthkerris, and his dog Bracken, preparing for divers to board the Kitten for a trip to the Manacles

My Experience on the BSAC Instructor Foundation Course - Nick Brooker

I'd only been diving a couple of years, and reached the dizzy heights of BSAC Sports Diver – although had gained some good experience with over 100 dives ranging from cold muddy puddles in Leicestershire, Gloucestershire and Somerset - to the warmer waters of Croatia, The Caribbean and Egypt, then back to the “slightly” less warm waters of the UK coast!

Part of the learning experience came in various BSAC Skill Development Courses (SDC's) – Boat Handling (what a laugh!), First Aid for Divers (I learnt that any of my patients that require bandaging end up looking like Pudsey Bear!) and then the more intense but still enjoyable Practical Rescue Management Course (I volunteered for this as this was to really help my progression to Dive Leader – at the time a long distant goal!).

Then one of my buddies, who had just qualified as a fully-fledged BSAC Open Water Instructor, asked whether I had considered “the Instructor route” (over a beer, I may add). Suddenly my brain switched into “automatic defense mechanism”, with me mumbling any reason NOT to do yet another SDC course – especially one that meant any chance of “me” exposing any self weakness!!! “Ummm, too busy!” was the first excuse! “Errr, I don't have the patience to teach!” was the second, swiftly followed by “Besides, you need to be a Dive Leader to be an Instructor!” my final get-out clause! – Wrong! Sports Divers can participate in the Instructor Foundations Course! My buddy just smiled, gave a reassuring nod then calmly said “think of the IFC as a try-dive for instructors!”

There it was, simple! By doing the IFC I could see if I “wanted” to become an instructor! There were no formal exams and few people fail the IFC, so quickly the pressure was off and the idea started to appeal!

The search then started, quite easy – the BSAC website gives loads of information as to where and when the courses are held, what you need to take and even handy tips/hints for students! Soon I had signed up - - Worcester School, a few months later.

The IFC is a two-day course run over a weekend where the essential elements of instruction are taught. The event is a balance of theory and practical sessions.

On the first day about 30 candidates are split into teams of 3, each team having its own instructor mentor– this was also a great way to meet divers from North Glos, Stroud and many other clubs! All naturally nervous, I didn't feel alone!

The day is split into some lectures on teaching theory techniques, using various media and how to use visual aids etc... then we chose a subject each to practice in our groups – with constructive feedback given. Although slightly nervous, everyone's in the same boat and soon it was like chatting with friends because of the small groups. The other part of the day takes place in the pool – learning practical teaching techniques within our little groups, both on the side of the pool and under water.

For both theory and practicals we first observed our mentor use various techniques for each... some so subtle that a student wouldn't notice an instructor using them!

For in-water practical sessions, the well-proven methodology of perfect demonstration of skills, mimic, encouragement and progression are shown. We learnt the value of breaking down skill sets into manageable steps and successfully developing the skills of a trainee.

Day one (the Saturday) was over in a flash.... We had all been given one theory lesson to "teach" and a practical session to "teach" the next day – which meant at some point on the Saturday night I had to prepare! Those reading this that may have now dropped the idea of doing this course don't worry! I had time to go out for dinner and a few beers with other students and the team of instructors AS WELL as prepare for "my" lessons the next day! Actually, the Saturday night out became a bit of a blur.... I put that down to the stress of me being back in the class room for the first time since I failed most of my O'levels in 1985 (NOT the several pints of Guinness!)

On day two, half the group headed to the pool for their practicals and my half of the group headed to the classrooms for the theory lessons we were to give. It's only a ten minute lesson in front of your own group and mentor – so again it was like chatting to friends! My particular given subject was on "Diving Signals" – so I was able to use a lot of "audience participation!" – Again this was over in a flash – in fact most of us found that the hard bit is keeping to the 10 minutes! In turn the 3 of us in my group gave their lessons – one on "diving cylinders" and the other on "SMBs". After a well earned cup of tea we had a debriefing – all constructive and positive comments and suggestions. And that was it for theory!

After lunch our bunch of 3 man teams headed to the pool. My given lesson, to my surprise, wasn't on an element of Scuba Diving, but on snorkeling! Again my 10 minute lesson on snorkeling seemed to pass in a flash. Others in my group had to teach a Controlled Buoyant Lift and Mask Clear – all went very well. After getting changed we headed back to the classroom for more debriefing – again all positive and constructive with a few excellent tips to use for the future!

The two main groups then got together for a full course debrief. The entire two days was covered, high-lighting where we had employed the new skills we had learnt...followed by presentation of certificates and hand-shakes.

The two days were intensive but overwhelmingly enjoyable for all. Driving home I remembered what my buddy had said – that the IFC was probably one of the most enjoyable SDC's that BSAC run – an opinion I now share. As well as learning a bit about skills and techniques to use to teach, I also learnt a heck of a lot about my own diving habits. It certainly has made me a far more considerate buddy (I have been told since!) – Whether I continue along the instructor route or not!

Therefore my message is this - those Sports Divers and above who have never considered an IFC before, please do - only then can you make your mind up about taking an instructor path!



Nick being presented with his Assistant Instructor Certificate by Andrea Dickens of BSAC.

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The Committee would like to thank everyone who provided stories for this newsletter, especially Nicola Foxe who started the ball rolling with a couple of great articles and did a lot of research into the start-up of Cotswold 332.