

BATSAC NEWSLETTER



Scapa Flow, September 2007

In September, a group of us headed to the North of the North, as they say. Scapa Flow is in the North of the Orkneys, i.e. head to the Northern tip of Scotland and keep going.

Some flew and some of us drove, either way we all got together on the Saturday night in the Ferry Inn, Stromness. Our home for the week.



BATSAC members included Lisa, Jason, Bob, and Steve Grr. Other members of the trip included SASAC members, two independent divers and two German divers.

For those unfamiliar with the so called UK diving mecca, Scapa Flow is one of Britain's most historic stretches of water. Located within the Orkney Islands, off the northeast coast of Scotland. Its sheltered waters have been used by ships since prehistory and it has played an important role in travel, trade and conflict throughout the centuries - especially during both World Wars.

During the First World War, the British Grand Fleet used Scapa Flow as a northern base. After a German U-Boat managed to enter the Flow early in the war, merchant ships were sent as blockships in strategic places and anti-submarine nets were put in place. From this base, vessels from the fleet made sweeps in search of the enemy.

In 1916, the British Grand Fleet left to fight in the Battle of Jutland. 24 battleships and 3 battlecruisers, plus destroyers and scouting cruisers set out under the command of Admiral Sir John Jellicoe. They met the German High Seas Fleet in battle. There was much damage wrought, with many thousands of men losing their lives, but both sides believed they had won. However, after the battle, the Kaiser's fleet never went to sea again.

In June 1916, Lord Kitchener, the Minister of War, arrived in Scapa Flow to visit Admiral Jellicoe and hear his account of the Battle of Jutland, Kitchener left on board the Hampshire, and sailed up the west coast of Orkney. Near Birsay, the Hampshire struck a mine, and only 12 men out of 665 survived. In 1926, money was raised by public subscription to erect the Kitchener Memorial at Marwick Head near Birsay.

After the armistice, seventy-four ships of the German High Seas Fleet were ordered into Scapa Flow to be interned. They arrived in November 1918, and stayed there for 10 months. During this time, they became a tourist attraction, with boat trips to see them. By June 1919, Rear Admiral von Reuter, the German Officer in command at Scapa Flow, knew that Germany would have to accept surrender terms. When the main part of the British Fleet left the flow for exercises he gave the order for the German fleet to be scuttled.

Most of the scuttled fleet did not stay where they had sunk. Those that were beached were removed almost immediately. In the 1920s, the firm Cox & Douglas began salvage operations, lifting many of the ships. This salvage continued until the advent of the Second World War, and only eight scuttled ships now remain in the Flow.

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The Diving

We started off the week with a trip out to dive the Karlsruhe, a Cruiser of the Königsberg II-class for the more technically minded of you! It was a pleasant start to the week with visibility in the range of about 10m.



The Karlsruhe is one of the shallowest of the Scapa wrecks, with a maximum sea bed depth of 26 metres and so is often the first wreck of the week.

As it can be seen by this picture of Cat, a SASAC diver, all the wrecks are covered in sea life, primarily in the form of anemones and dead man's fingers.

Everyone had a good start to the week and a pleasant surprise with the viz, given the viz down south all summer.

Our second dive of the day was one of the blockships... Gobernadore Bories, Jason and Bob, as can be seen opposite decided to spend the entire dive gassing... not that men gossip of course!

With the blockships, it is often hard to tell where the wreck ends and the sea life begins. You land in what appears to be a kelp bed, but when you look closer and begin to move about you soon realise that you are in fact in the middle of the ship!

Penetration is not required as it is all completely open. There is one area you can swim into and out of the same entrance, a few years ago this used to be a swim thru.

There are lots of eating options in Scapa however the food and especially the puddings in the Royal Hotel won everyone over, and ensured no one would be losing weight during the week. We also had the delight of the Stromness Blues festival taking place the weekend we arrived, which was, well ... interesting shall we say.

The second day brought the Brummer, one of my favourite wrecks, I personally saw the whole wreck for the first time ever in one dive. However this was because my buddy's camera wasn't working so he decided that he wanted to see everything, although how he saw anything beats me (personally I prefer slow meandering and seeing things -call me old fashioned!!).



The Brummer was a German Light Cruiser, weighing in at a mere 4308 tonnes. She lies on her side, and the bit that excites

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most people are that her guns are clearly visible. You can also recognise most areas shown in the above diagram; the shot rests over the navigation bridge which is easily recognisable in the viz available.



The afternoon we dived another blockship known as the Tubarka. This blockship is more intact than the previous blockship and offers the option of penetration for those who are interested, there are clear entrances and exits and daylight can be seen at all times.

There were some strong currents to contend with on this wreck if you tried to swim on the wrong side!

On the second evening, some of us headed off to find the Ring of Brogar. This is also classed as a 'Henge' in a similar fashion to Stonehenge. It is a Neolithic stone ring thought to have been erected between 2500 and 2000 BC. It is also thought to be the last Neolithic construction built north of Ness.



Day three brought another flat day at sea, and we dived the Köln, a Dresden Class II cruiser. The Köln was the last of the German ships to be surrendered and the first to be scuttled.

A lot of the wrecks in Scapa Flow including the Köln are now part of a new project in sonar imaging, which produces the image to the left. This also means that the pictures now visible to us show what the wreck actually looks like, as opposed to what it looked like once upon a time.

In the afternoon we dived the F2. This was an escort vessel with its own escort barge, the YC21. The F2 still contains a gun which can be seen to the more observant, as it lies next to the line which joins the F2 to its barge. I say more observant, given that not many people seemed to find it!! If however you crossed the line to the barge you were in for a pleasant treat as no one had stirred up the viz!! What surprises most when they find the gun which sits in the midst of the wreckage where it had been removed from the F2, it makes for a very pleasant site and gives a few small swim thrus.

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That evening we all went to visit Skara Brae, the oldest Neolithic village discovered in the world. It was thought to be inhabited between 3200 and 2200 BC.

It was however evacuated as it slowly eroded into the sea and could no longer sustain the population living there.



Day 4 diving brought us the Kronprinz Wilhelm, a battleship. This small statement however does no justice to the size of it. Like most of the battleships in Scapa it lies upside down. To put her into perspective with the wrecks mentioned previously she weighs in at a hefty 25388 tonnes, nearly five times as much as the Brummer. When you dive her, you really have no idea how big she really is, for reference she is 575ft long. I would also like to add here, that Cat found a nudibranch, which is tops of an inch long, and has decided if she got bored she would work out how long it would take the poor little nudi to walk the entire wreck, strangely enough she hasn't got that bored yet!! That afternoon by popular demand was a second dive on the Brummer. A bit more leisurely for me this time, as I had different buddy.

Day 5 brought a second dive on the Kronprinz, as everyone wanted to try and see some more of it, I dived with Bob on this dive and we soon realised that, being the first time he dived for more than 2 days in a row also meant that he had got more relaxed about it all and was about 2 kilos overweight. He did a good impression of crawling along the wreck (it has to be said). I also took great delight in introducing him to the nudibranch that Cat had found the previous day. One thing that you learn when you dive some wrecks is how to recognise some sections, which improves your ability to recognise the area when you return to it.

The afternoon dive was a shallow broken up wreck, as we were planning the James Barry the next morning, which was one of the deeper wrecks that are classed as suitable for sports divers.

Friday morning brought a dive which most people will remember and have etched on their minds for various reasons. We dived the James Barry, two years previously Pete, Steve Grr and my self completed this dive and it was stunning. It was the only dive I had ever done when I could see the entire wreck from the bottom of the shot, along with everyone one it. This year however brought very different conditions. Whilst we had slack water on the surface, we had a current starting at 20m, the sea bed was 40m. A lot of divers had problems with the current and with other divers hanging on the shot line. We, as a group reported two incidents to BSAC as a result of this dive; I am not going to go into details of the incident here as they are currently being reviewed by BSAC. Once they have completed their review I will post a report in the next newsletter. I would just like to say however, that everyone came back to the boat and no one required O2 or an airlift.

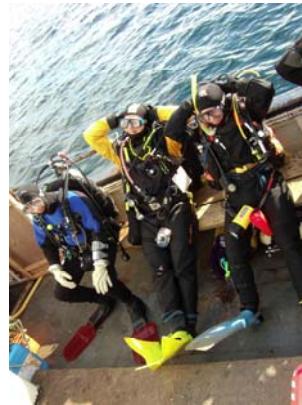
The mornings dive upset a lot of people so we changed plan for the afternoon and did the F2 and Barge again, to finish the week with a good note and a shallow, pretty and pleasant dive.

Overall everyone enjoyed the week, and a lot of people learnt a lot about their own diving ability and comfort zone. This is a big advantage of doing a full weeks diving in the UK. I would like to end this report with a few pictures you might enjoy.

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Do you think he enjoyed himself?



Just chillin!



Say no more?

Lisa Shafe
Trip Dive Manager
BATSAC and SASAC member

Incidents... Why do we report them?

One thing which became obvious in my role as Dive Manager for the week, some people were confused as to why we report diving incidents. I have reported incidents personally relating to me, as a previous DO of SASAC and as a trip dive manager. We report these incidents so that others can learn from our experiences and (hopefully) not make the same mistakes as those involved may have done, or aim not to get themselves into the same situation.

If something goes wrong, or rather when something goes wrong, it needs to be reported immediately to the person who is in charge of the trip and/or the skipper. Honesty is the best policy. When a report is given to the Dive Manager or the DO if there isn't a dive manager on the trip, they with your help will complete an incident report. This is available for downloading from:

<http://www.bsac.org/page/548/incident-report-form.htm>

No blame is ever assigned as part of this reporting procedure; it is purely used to learn from. BSAC have the following aim where these reports are concerned:

Our only aim is to increase safety through the monitoring of incidents and trends, and through the provision of data and advice to divers.

The reports are compiled into an annual incident report.

Lisa Shafe