

CLUB MEETINGS

The next club meeting is on Thursday 8th January in the coast bar of the Royal Beach. It will be a good opportunity to get together after the festive season so if you have not been for a while why not pop along. Remember that there is going to be a "special" raffle on the night, when we are asking you to bring in any unwanted Christmas pressies. You know the sort of thing, Turkish delight, pot pourri by the bucket load Basically anything that you don't want. The funnier the better. The only rules are you must wrap it and it must be anonymous. Last year we did this it raised a bit for charity and was a bit of fun. As usual, if you are coming, please let us know so that we can order enough food.

TRAINING

We were intending on taking a break from training in December so the only course successes we thought we would have were the Open Water course that started at the end of November and finished at the beginning of the month. However, we still managed to get through a few more so many congratulations to the students below. The next few months are really busy on the courses front, so watch this space.

Open Water

Hamish Allison, Frank Leak, Nick Ayling, Elodie Rousselot

Rescue

Tiphonie May, Kelvin Lam, Alice Walker

Enriched Air Diver

Matthew Richardson, Sandra Richardson

Tec Rec Gas Blender

Julian Pike, Zara Dyer, Andrew Hathaway

CHRISTMAS BALL



We have to say it, this is without doubt the best and most well supported dive club we know. The Christmas Ball was no exception. It was a high quality event in the Royal Beach hotel that was supported by around 120 club members and guests. We had a successful raffle with prizes worth over £600. Top prize was a food hamper worth £80, but there were others including a case of champers, meals for 2 at the Noble House, Estee Lauder products and many others. Thanks to everyone who kindly donated prizes and to all the guests for buying tickets. After the food, the dance floor was crammed (as usual) until the early hours. With over 50 of the group actually

staying in the hotel, the "after party" party went on for some time – infact rumour control was that some people left the bar at gone 6 in the morning. We have to say a huge well done to Stuart who had to get up and complete the open water course on the Sunday. We are still working on the next big function and will let you have more details in due course.

DESERT RUN FEATURES IN THE NEWS AND ON THE RADIO

This month the News got hold of my desert run exploits that I mentioned in the last newsletter and ran a very nice full page spread on my efforts. If you didn't see it you can get to it by following the following link:

<http://www.portsmouth.co.uk/news/Runner-keeps-cool-in-buildup.4806810.jp> Then the other day, I was contacted by the Quay Radio who wanted to give the run a plug, so they had an impromptu interview over the phone as well. Talking of the desert run, last month I sent out an appeal for support. A few of you have very kindly donated and I know that a number of you are trying to help by collecting sponsorships. Just a reminder, every little bit helps, no matter how small, so please help this worthwhile cause. For those of you that have asked about making on-line donations, I have now put a donation button on the pages of the run the sahara website (www.run-the-sahara.org) so you can make payments through that quickly, securely and easily.

THE GRIM CHALLENGE



At the beginning of December, in fact it was the same day as the Christmas Ball, I undertook the GRIM Challenge. This was an 8 mile "off road" race, that I thought might be a useful addition to the training programme for the desert run. The website said that you would get cold and wet and muddy and that the most important thing to take was a sense of humour - and they were not wrong.



Around 2500 enter the race on the Saturday and the same number on the Sunday. The course starts easily enough and initially everyone is trying to skirt around the ice covered puddles. However, the tracks soon narrow, (or was it that the puddles got bigger) and you were soon in up to your knees. Some walked, and some made as much splash as possible. My white shirt, specially provided by my charity Water Aid, changed colour very rapidly. As soon as your feet went in they turned to freezing blocks and it took about 2 miles before I could feel my toes again - during which time there were frequent puddles and more ice. The hills were not too severe but took a toll - you could tell that you were going uphill as the breathing got heavier. I noticed as well that muscles were not coping with the cold water - keeping them working was important. I had a very unflattering pair of running tights on (not a good look) but was really glad that I did. A lot of people were dressed in just shorts - ouch!



After a few miles of running we came across a small cargo net. This was a bit misleading, because at the beginning, the board outlining details of the route had stated that the cargo net was 5 minutes walk from the main water obstacle, which was at the 5 miles point. Hey, me thinks, I am doing well – this must must be 4 and 1/2 miles! With a new spring in my step I went on for another half mile to find a water station - bummer, this was the 4 mile point. I eagerly put the bottle to my lips, but actually, drinking water that was really freezing cold was difficult so after a couple of sips I discarded the bottle, along with 2000 other bottles. 200m down the track was a sign saying "bottles here". Oh well a nice idea. About half a mile on and we cane across the real cargo net - it didn't look to bad, you could stoop rather than crawl.



However, what you didn't realize was that the gully of knee deep mud that followed it was strength sapping. The tread on my

once clean inov8 trail shoes meant for nothing, however, previously learned downhill skiing skills were a real bonus. I got through that and I knew that in a couple of minutes I would come across the big puddle. A big crowd gathered to watch hapless runners come a cropper in the brown filthy water.

A group of kids crowded around one area in particular and as runners got to them they shouted "hole". But it was always too late and another athlete decided to practice front crawl. Once through those 2 obstacles everything else was ok. A long track and then a lovely little slope as you came to the finish area before another surprise at the end, yes a huge puddle just before you crossed the line. But I did it. 1 hour 22 minutes which was ok and the aim was to just test out shoes and legs over a bit of more testing terrain than Southsea Seafont. Good fun? Definitely, and I would do it again just for the giggle. If anyone wants to join me next year, let me know!

**THE LAST DIVE OF THE YEAR
TUESDAY 30 DECEMBER**



9 courageous, or was it foolhardy, club members braved some chilly winds to log the last dive of the year from the club RIB down in Portland today. Some of the guys went last night to make the most of Ron and Dale's hospitality at Fathom & Blues. The plan had been to do a couple of shallow dives and one deep one, but with force 4 winds and some less than brilliant vis we decided to keep it safe, stay in the harbour, and make sure that everyone at least got a dive in.



A recent letter in Dive magazine highlighted the potential dangers of boats putting divers in even when the vis is crap and we were not going to go down that route. As it was, vis was not brilliant on the Landing Craft, but we made the most of it. Some then

braved a second dive on the Countess which was a bit better. A special word has to go out to Debs, Tom and Les who were in wetsuits, to Derek who lost his car keys and held us up for an hour and to Julie, for the best exit routine. Captions for the photo below on a postcard please.



CLUB DIVES FOR 2009



Next year we have set up a programme of club dives using the RIB. The boat is going to be running every Wednesday for club members. You can tell us what dives you fancy doing. We need a minimum of 4 people and harbour dives are going to be just £15, with £25 for dives slightly further afield. We need a weeks notice for bookings. Why not get onto the club facebook site and get something organized. As well as the mid week stuff, we have allocated the fourth weekend of each month as club weekend. The boat will be available to club members to do whatever you want out of Portland at the same discounted prices.

**A BIG THANK YOU FOR HELPING US
TO MAKE 2008 SUCH A SUCCESS**

As another successful year comes to an end, it only leaves us to say a massive thank you to all our customers and club members who have continued to support us and make sure that we remain the best dive centre and the best dive club in the South.



The year has been very busy. It started off brilliantly, with Triton Scuba being presented with the "Best Small Business" award in January – a fantastic achievement and one that recognized our position as the premier dive centre in the area. The club got out and about as well. During the year we ran 3 successful holiday trips, going to Malta, Egypt and Galapagos – all of which were full to maximum capacity. With trips next year to Egypt and Borneo already nearly full to capacity, it looks like 2009 is going to produce some fantastic holiday moments as well.



The club social events have been as good as ever and really well attended. We had regular monthly club meetings (with an average of 60 members attending), 3 black tie functions for well over 100, a brilliant Halloween party and three guest speakers coming in throughout the course of the year. These special events saw divers from several clubs in the area joining us and it was fantastic to see them. On the fund raising side we once again did more than our fair share – each social event raised some funds, the Sport Relief Mile in March was funny albeit painful as it was the day after the ball – raised around £800. Running in full diving kit was not the brightest idea but the heliox radio interview was a classic. Summer came and the sudden closure of Horsea was a blow not only to the local diving community but it inevitably had an impact on training. But we moved on ... we bought a fantastic 7.5M RIB and now run this as an integral part of our training courses. In fact, this asset has improved the courses, by providing students with real diving in a proper open water environment, as well as boat experience; all with very little inconvenience. When we look at it in hindsight, the training we now offer from the boat is vastly better than struggling in shallow, silty quarries with nothing to see.



The boat has also been used for club trips providing members with some great diving at a much lower price; next year we reckon it will get lots of use. On the training front 2008 was another busy year. A quick tot up shows this as our busiest year ever for professional level training, with 18 candidates qualifying as Instructors. When you include DM and speciality instructor certifications we have achieved just over 100 professional certifications this year. On the non-professional side we have processed exactly 350 certifications – not our best year, but not bad considering the credit crunch. So, as we revel in festive cheer, mince pies, cold turkey and sore heads over Christmas and the New Year, we are also looking forward to 2009 as we continue to strive to be the best we can and ensure that we offer you the service you want and deserve. Without you, we could not have done it, so thank you once again for your support and we look forward to seeing you and diving with you next year.

We hope you have had a happy Christmas and we wish you all a prosperous and credit crunch free 2009
Jean, Bill, David, Ian and Zara.