

# Heinke Trophy 2018

An application by  
RAF Lossiemouth  
Sub-Aqua Club



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## INTRODUCTION

RAF Lossiemouth Sub-Aqua Club is a special branch, number 565, of the British Sub-Aqua Club. It was formed in 1973, although it is believed to have been in existence before that with the Royal Navy, either under the name of RNAS Lossiemouth, or HMS Fulmar. The club is accommodated within the base, which is situated on the coast of the Moray Firth in the North-East of Scotland. As a military branch, even though we are engaged in sport diving, we are classed as, 'diving at work'. This is due to Sub-Aqua being classified as an 'Adventurous Training (AT) Activity' by the MoD. Because AT is an 'on-duty' activity, it then follows that we are at work when diving. This brings with it some advantages, but also some disadvantages, which means we operate in a different manner to 'normal' branches.



Figure 1 RAF Lossiemouth lies 6 miles North of Elgin on the Moray Firth

## 1. MEMBERSHIP

**Numbers** As 2017 drew to a close, the branch membership stood at 34 active divers. The detailed breakdown is listed below:

Divers	No.	Instructors	No.	Supervisors	No.
Trainee	4	Assistant Instructor	2	ESADS	3
Ocean Diver	10	Open Water Instructor	2	BSADS	1
Sports Diver	11	Advanced Instructor	4		
Dive Leader	4	Assistant Instructor Trainer	1		
Advanced Diver	3	Instructor Trainer	1		
First Class Diver	2				
<b>Totals</b>	<b>34</b>		<b>10</b>		<b>4</b>

As a service branch, we are not allowed to conduct any diving without the presence of a Diving Supervisor. These are unpaid volunteers, who accept the full legal

responsibility of conducting diving operations for the benefit of other service personnel and there are two grades of supervisor.

An Expedition Sub-Aqua diving Supervisor (ESADS) is an experienced Advanced Diver who has completed the course and assessment at Joint Service Sub-Aqua Diving Centre (JSSADC) in Plymouth. ESADS are responsible for all the planning and supervision of diving activities, including unknown locations. Without one on the surface, no diving is allowed to take place, (although an Advanced Diver can deputise for the SADS while he dives). There is another grade of supervisor known as a Branch SADS (BSADS). A BSADS is a Dive Leader who has completed the week long course at JSSADC and is authorised to supervise nominated branch sites with which they are already familiar. This can give rise to the curious position where a Dive Leader (BSADS) over-rules an Advanced Diver.

While the vast majority of the branch are local to Lossiemouth, we do have a number of members from further afield, such as Perth, Cambridge and even London! These divers have dived with us previously, loved the way we do business and prefer to stay with the branch and conduct their diving with us.

One of the unique challenges faced by Service branches is the transient nature of the members, many of whom are only in post for a few years then move on again. However, the increasing reliability on reservists within the RAF has had an unforeseen benefit for the branch. A significant number of the senior diver grades in the branch are all reservists and these individuals fulfil the majority of committee positions. Because these members are settled with no plans to move, this situation has a stabilising effect on the branch and ensures constancy over the years.

**Snorkelling** This is not recognised by the MoD as 'Adventurous', therefore it is not an activity that we are allowed to be involved in while diving. Indeed, the Joint Service Regulations that we must abide by, actually forbids snorkelling between dives (Divers can snorkel and surface-swim, but must not submerge or be involved in any breath-holding).

**Administration** The branch has a fully constituted committee in accordance with BSAC regulations and is compliant with the Branch Officers Handbook. An AGM is held when the majority of the members are available. All branch officers submit their reports for the year, stand down and elections take place in the traditional manner. The presence of reservists, who generally work locally, ensures that diving continues throughout the year, and is not affected by key personnel being posted away or sent on detachment. A slight difference to the norm is that the Diving Officer must be appointed by the Station Commander, who is the risk holder for diving activities at Lossiemouth. The branch has an annual fee of £50 which has remained steady for the last few years.

The junior members of the branch are encouraged to take an active role in either a committee position or as an understudy to the more experienced members, especially on expeditions. The senior divers are acutely aware that their time is limited and it is only a matter of time before they have to quit, therefore, the younger

divers are encouraged to get involved so that the club can carry on into the next 45 years.

Because of our 'diving at work' status, all divers must have an in-date diving medical. Dependant on age, these medicals are valid for either 5, 3 or 1 year. Unfortunately, there is no distinction regarding age with the medicals, this means that the more mature members are required to be just as fit as a 19 year old! The upside of this requirement is that more of the club members can be found in the gym, in order to remain fit enough to pass the medical and physical tests. Service divers can get these medicals completed at the Medical Centre at Lossiemouth, however, authorised civilians must have a HSE Commercial Diver medical which is only valid for 1 year and can cost in excess of £200. Unfortunately, this requirement has had an adverse effect on the number of civilians in the club. Our longest serving member retired from diving last year due to this ruling and we now only have 2 civilian members.

**Information** The main method of branch communications is by a combination of email and texting. Despite all the other forms of social media, these 2 methods remain the most reliable way of communicating information to everybody. Whatsapp is currently under consideration in order to find a method to reach everybody. The club training room has a notice-board where all the legal workplace information is displayed (Risk assessments, Fire safety, Health and Safety plan, etc.). Future planned expeditions are advertised on another notice-board with dates, etc, allowing members to make arrangements to get onto the trip as soon as possible.

Rescue, First Aid and Oxygen lessons are permanently displayed on a notice-board for all members to see. The hope is that constant exposure to the lessons will subconsciously help members remember emergency procedures.

A new information board, which is still a work in progress, is a large chart of the Moray Firth. Around the chart are photographs of all the wreck sites which the club frequently visit. A second chart has been started for the Ullapool area which is the base for a number of our expeditions. These are ideal for detailed site briefings.



*Figure 2 Chart of the Moray Firth and popular wreck sites*

**Promotion** The branch has done lots of work in order to publicise the club to potential new members or already qualified divers on the base. The Station Gymnasium staff are responsible for all Adventurous Training on base, including Sub-Aqua. Annually, they hold an open day where all the clubs on camp gather at the gym and hold a 'visibility' event to show their existence to the wider service community at Lossiemouth. The branch maintains a stand which includes a comprehensive dive kit display, including rebreathers, twinsets, RIBs and a video showing UK diving activities. Plenty of members are on hand to explain the attractions of Scottish diving and the benefits of doing it while in the services (An unforeseen benefit of this event is we have managed to recruit some PADI divers. Because these divers are already trained and can cross over, our training burden is reduced and they can come out diving straight away). This event is not just used as a recruiting tool, but our engagement enhances the clubs reputation with important personalities on base.

Sadly, a recent policy change dictated that personnel wishing to conduct Try-Dives, must have a full diver medical. The reasoning for this change is because these personnel are deemed to be diving at work, therefore must be medically fit to venture underwater. The medical services on camp are happy to accommodate the large number of medicals for the trained divers, but if the branch were to continue to conduct Try-Dives, the strain on the medical centre would be unsustainable and potentially disastrous for the club. Regrettably, the decision was made, that while the policy is still in place, then Try-Dives would no longer be offered or conducted in order to protect the branch. However, we are liaising with our local branch in order to bypass this regulation, so that we can conduct Try-Dives with service personnel 'off-duty'.

The annual club expedition to Dundonnell has shone a light on the branch from a number of different quarters. The RAF has an Adventurous magazine called, 'Active', which is disseminated to all RAF units. An article was written and presented to 'Active' for inclusion this winter, the magazine has still to go to press, but the article is at Annex A.

The expedition report for Dundonnell 2017 has been entered into the RAF Sub-Aqua Association (RAFS-AA) awards for 2017 (see more in Diving Activities, Competitions), but the report also caught the eye of the Officer in Charge of JSSADC. He then wrote an article bestowing praise upon the expedition and its conduct, which was put onto their website. The article can be found at [www.jssadc.org/expeds-old-fashioned-way/](http://www.jssadc.org/expeds-old-fashioned-way/) or a copy can be read at Annex B, titled, 'Expeds: the old-fashioned way'.

The club was also successful in winning the RAFS-AA Darrol Stinton Award 2016. Although the award was presented at an event in Plymouth in March 2017, it was decided to have a more formal presentation of the trophy to enhance the exposure and reputation of the club. Accordingly, 2 of the club members were presented with the award by the Station Commander at the RAF Lossiemouth Awards and Presentations day.





Figure 3 Gp Capt Paul Godfrey OBE, officially presents Capt Ken Scott and Flt Lt Mark Istance the Darrol Stinton trophy

A group photo of the club members on the 3 RIBs at Dundonnell was also sent in to Scuba magazine for inclusion in the Postcard page. This made the October 2017 edition. The offer of a free BSAC club banner is still under consideration regarding the design before it is ordered. Once a decision has been finalised, the banner will be positioned in the station gym to give maximum exposure for the club.



Figure 4 RAF Lossiemouth divers in Scuba magazine Oct 2017

All of the above activities have helped to raise the profile of the branch on the station. This is important because the branch has to prove to our budget holders and higher command that we are a worthwhile investment of public funds. To satisfy this requirement, we believe that we provide cost-effective and multiple opportunities for quality Adventurous Training to service personnel from RAF Lossiemouth and the wider service community.

## **2. DIVER TRAINING**

**Water Work** The majority of pool training is conducted at Forres swimming pool. There are 4 other pools which are closer to Lossiemouth, but do not really suit our sub-aqua needs. Lossiemouth, Gordonstoun School and Elgin pools are all available but are shallower than Forres. The pool at Kinloss is deep enough but cannot be relied upon to be open when it's needed. The council pool in Forres meets all our needs and is a reasonable 3m deep. For sheltered water training, there are a number of local harbours which can be, and are, utilised.

Lossiemouth marina is used for most of our initial Open Water training because it is fairly quiet, easily accessible, and at high water gives 5m depth. It is also a reasonable dive in its own right, with plenty to see, including, wreckage, brass, and copious amounts of life to further encourage the trainees to carry on with their diving careers. A good working relationship with the marina staff ensures that we never have any problems conducting diver training within the marina. An example of helping out the marina is that one of our members is a pub landlord. He has agreed to keep all the welcome packs for visiting sailors who arrive at Lossiemouth out of normal hours within the pub. This enables the sailors to berth, access electrical hook-ups, and all the facilities within a short space of time. It also means that the grateful sailors are usually back later on for a couple of drinks!

The marina at Lossiemouth also has an old slipway which is perfect for training purposes, being sheltered from all except for a south-easterly wind. This makes it an ideal location for practical rescue drills that we are required to conduct on an annual basis and for elements of the Dive Leader syllabus or any other shore-based training.



*Figure 5 Ocean Diver training in Lossiemouth marina*

For those progressing further with their training, qualifying dives are routinely conducted every time we are out diving. Those requiring a drill or lesson are buddied with an instructor and at some stage in the dive, the lessons will be completed. This approach of conducting training on most dives soon shows results which are evidenced by the number of divers progressed or qualified in 2017.



**Theory Lessons** The club building includes 2 small rooms, one is used as a lounge/social area, and the other adjoining room is fitted out as a small classroom which is used for theory lessons and conducting theory tests. The branch is not entitled to IT systems under MoD policy, so instructors bring in their own laptops and projectors for presentations.



*Figure 6 The Club social area showing information board, a small selection of club awards, and local dive sites on chart*

Organised training programs resulted in very few trainees turning up at the designated time and after only a few lessons those trainees would be at wildly differing stages of the training syllabus. It was soon discovered that this was due to the trainees work commitments, i.e., shifts, courses, detachments, etc. We realised that the most efficient way of teaching would be to offer a bespoke individual service. What happens now is that anybody requiring training will call some of the instructors, see which one is free during the working day and, slowly but surely, get the theory lessons signed off. The fact that these lessons can be conducted during the working day, such as lunch-times or just a free hour here and there has resulted in an increase in the amount of lessons signed off. It also frees up club evenings for other task, such as kit maintenance, more lessons or planning future trips.

If larger premises or classes are required, the club also has the use of the Station Learning Centre which has a comprehensive IT suite and large classrooms. We also have the use of the Army Reserve Centre in Elgin which is similarly equipped. Both these resources are great for larger courses or training, although the Army Centre is especially useful because civilians can gain access without lengthy security checks. This enables us to still have an input into other local diving branch training.

**Courses** As well as conducting the usual Diver Training Programme for our branch members, there were 2 bespoke Ocean Diver courses conducted by Lossiemouth

Instructors. Both of these courses were for Army personnel in order for them to attend overseas Sub-Aqua Diving expeditions.

There was also an AED and Oxygen Administration course conducted for the local branches which was held in the Army Reserve Centre, utilising Lossiemouth equipment and instructors. This looks likely to be a regular annual event for the North Scotland region in the years to come.

As a service branch, we are required to conduct Continuous First Aid Training (CFAT) on an annual basis. This is essentially Dive Leader theory lessons DT2 through to DT7 with some additional practical lessons including AED and extensive practical exercises. Individuals completing annual CFAT can be nominated on the dive conduct slate as qualified first aiders in the event of a diving incident. As this is a pre dive season requirement, it is only conducted once, usually in February. This ensures a high turnout of club members, meaning we have a healthy number of trained, competent and current first aiders on site at all times.

A couple of individuals have attended national courses. One attended the ITDC at the beginning of 2017 and is now working through the events to be signed off as an Instructor Trainer. Another member is attending the National Instructor prep events in readiness for the NI exam.

**Qualifications** This year has been a good one for qualifying either new or established and experienced divers. A large percentage of the Ocean Diver and Sport Diver qualifications were gained as a result of courses delivered for overseas expeditions. The remainder were all branch members who gained the qualification through normal branch training. The qualifications achieved by the branch are listed below:

Diver Grade	Number qualified
Ocean Diver	18
Sports Diver	12
Dive Leader	1
Advanced Diver	0
First Class Diver	1

Instructor Grade	Number qualified
Assistant Instructor Trainer	1
Instructor Trainer	1

There are 2 divers (a Sport Diver and a Dive Leader) who are both a single lesson away from achieving the next grade, and this would have made our statistics look a little better. However, as they are out-with the requirements of the award, they have not been included in the tables above.

**Equipment** The club is very well off in terms of equipment, which is a result of years of gathering kit through various means, such as submitting financial bids and

lots of hard work behind the scenes keeping everything serviceable. A lot of individual diving equipment has been donated by retiring divers, which has then been carefully serviced to ensure it stays fit for purpose.

The 3 RIBs and engines are serviced annually by a local marine engineer with whom we have a good working relationship. This is usually conducted in the depths of winter when the boats are not being used. The boat trailers have recently been deemed to be 'Service transport equipment' (even though the boats haven't!). This means the trailers are now serviced by the on-base engineering department, whereas previously, the servicing was carried out by club members who worked in an engineering capacity.



*Figure 7 The 3 branch RIBs parked in the club building*

The compressors are serviced and maintained by club members and the young engineers are encouraged to become involved in order to maximise the use of their professional knowledge. Compressors are required to have an air test every 3 months, which is carried out by club members using one of the 2 FactAir testers. Annually, air samples for each compressor have to be sent away for particulate testing to ensure the air meets the required HSE Compressed Natural Breathing Air (CNBA) requirements. Whilst not a particularly difficult task, it is demanding on time, yet club members set about getting it all accomplished so that we are compliant with the regulations, and can dive happy in the knowledge that our gas is fit for purpose.

Regulators and cylinders are serviced and tested by one of the members who is also an IDEST Technician and owner of his own servicing business. This means the club equipment usually gets put to the front of the queue and is never out of action for long. There is also another member who has completed the Apeks Regulator servicing course and he is involved with servicing regulators and BCDs.

Dry-suits are maintained and repaired either by club members, or, when we can manage it, the Safety Equipment workshop. This is a small department which is responsible for servicing and repairing immersion suits worn by the aircrew (immersion suits are essentially lightweight dry-suits with latex seals). The Safety

Equipment staff are more than happy to look after our suits and they have the facilities and expertise to do a first class job.

The club also has its own 'expeditionary capability' with some large tents, camp-beds, tables, chairs, lights and cooker. These have been used to great effect in the past with some popular camping/diving trips to the west coast of Scotland.

Within the last couple of months, the club eventually managed to have running water installed outside the building. This enables us now to wash the kit, boats and engines at the club, rather than using the facilities situated on the other side of the base. We have also managed to finally create servicing logs for all of the trailers, boats, engines and compressors. Previously, this had been a bit Ad Hoc, relying on memory and receipts. Now, however, each piece of equipment has its own log.

A detailed list of the club equipment is included in the annual return, which is at Annex C.

### **3. DIVING ACTIVITIES**

**Branch Dives** The club mainly dives in 2 Scottish regions. In summer, while the weather is favourable, diving is mainly always conducted in the Moray Firth because of the close proximity of launching locations. The exception to this is the annual trip to Dundonnell, which is elaborated upon later. During winter months when the Moray Firth is unsuitable for diving, then the focus changes to various shore sites on the West coast of Scotland, Loch Duich and Ullapool being very popular because they can be reached within a 2.5 hour journey, 2 good dives can be accomplished, and everybody is back home by a reasonable time in the evening.

The main sites dived by the branch are mentioned in the annual return (Annex C), although there are other sites and anomalies which are passed to us by local fishermen and other sea-goers which are enthusiastically investigated in the hope of finding new sites. Diving these marks was rewarded by the discovery of an RAF WW2 bomber. The find has been reported to the appropriate authorities but future plans and intentions are on hold for the moment.

The annual dive statistics are also at Annex C and encompass the period from 30 Sep to 1 Oct which is our annual reporting period. In summary, the branch achieved 753 dives, of which 18 were CCR, 114 Nitrox and 621 Air. Time spent underwater was 25,481 minutes, equating to 424+hours, or over 17.5 days.

**Expeditions** The club accomplished 6 major expeditions in 2017, 4 in the UK and 2 were overseas. In February the club went to Balmacara House, which is a large MoD establishment near the Isle of Skye. It offers warm accommodation and catering staff, leaving the club free to concentrate on diving activities. An Ocean Diver course and training event was the aim of this trip which was very successful.

In March, 2 of the senior members supervised and conducted another expedition to the Ascension Island for divers of the Cambridge University Air Squadron (CUAS). This has been another long-term commitment which has been accomplished through personal networking and friendships. At Annex D, is a letter of gratitude exemplifying

one example of the contribution made by the divers of Lossiemouth branch for the benefit of other service divers who are not necessarily members of the club.

In May, the club completed 'Crafty Crofter 5', which is the fifth successive annual trip to Dundonnell, Little Loch Broom. This trip is worthy of note as it is growing in popularity and size each year and is phenomenally successful. Last year the club hosted 18 divers from as far afield as London, Cambridge and Perth, and needed all the club RIBs and equipment to facilitate this most successful trip so far. This location is more austere than Balmacara, and divers have to fend for themselves. While this increases the workload, all the divers pull together in the spirit of AT and get the job done. A club photo was sent off to Scuba magazine which was published in the Postcard section of the October edition (Figure 4).



*Figure 8 George Fearnley at Dundonnell*

July saw 6 members head to Norway for a week long live-aboard trip on MV Karin, diving various sites out of Bergen. This was what is known as a 'private trip', meaning it is not planned as an Adventurous Training activity and exped members just pay for everything out of their own pocket. Whilst being more expensive, this also negates the legislation and extensive paperwork required to make it a duty event.





*Figure 9 L to R: Pat Woods, Mark Istance, Robbie Woods at 50M on the Parat in Norway*



*Figure 10 L to R: John Thornton in wheelhouse, Ken Scott, Mark Istance, Gary Partridge, Robbie Woods, Pat Woods, John Colquhoun*

In September, 7 divers went for a long weekend to Scapa Flow diving the German Fleet. Travelling from Lossiemouth to the Orkney Islands is a relatively short trip, so the long weekend has started to establish itself as an annual event too, alongside the like of Crafty Crofter. The trip was accommodated in the Army Reserve Centre in Kirkwall, then driving each day to Stromness, to dive from the MV Jean Elaine. Catering was accomplished by using the many restaurants available locally.



*Figure 11 L to R: Mac McCarthy, Mike Mason, Ken Scott, Jimmy Pearson, Pat Woods, Dan Turner, Mark Istance*

November saw the club return to Balmacara House for a dedicated training weekend. Sadly, although many lessons were successfully ticked off, the weather was foul which restricted what we had hoped to achieve. Nevertheless, another enjoyable trip and training opportunity was provided for the club membership, many of whom took advantage of it – including one member who drove up from London and back again a couple of days later!

**Scientific** The branch currently has 3 survey projects underway. The first is the recently discovered wreck of a WW2 RAF bomber. This project is currently on hold while legislation and other legal issues are investigated.

The second is a new idea which is still in the early planning stages. Essentially, it is hoped to conduct a thorough survey on the wreck of the oil tanker San Tiburcio, which is one of Scotland's most famous shipwrecks. Because most of the available information of the wreck is decades old and out of date, the ultimate aim is to produce an up-to-date picture and resource of how the wreck appears today.

The third project, which is underway, is to find and survey the sunken Valentine tanks from the D-Day rehearsals, which were lost in March 1944. At least 5 tanks are known to have foundered, 2 of them are known to local divers. Last summer, after extensive searching, the club found a third tank which was previously unknown. Sadly, the first divers down reported that the propeller was missing. It has since transpired, after conversations with older divers, that this wreck has merely been 'rediscovered'. Undeterred, the search continues for the remaining 2 tanks, after which it is intended to conduct a full photographic survey on them all.

**Competitions** Like BSAC, the RAF Sub-Aqua Association have an annual awards scheme which rewards successful branches. In 2017, the Lossiemouth club entered, and won, the Darrol Stinton Award, which is awarded to the best club in the RAF. The detailed requirements for this award are detailed in Annex E. This achievement was based upon our 2016 activities and the successful application is at Annex F.

2017 has been an even better year, so not only have we re-applied for the Darrol Stinton Award; we have also submitted entries for 4 other awards. These are, Diver of the Year, Jamie Choules, Post Exped Report, and the Video Award. After the awards presentation on 7 Mar 2018, the video will be sent to BSAC and made available for the video award if it is decided to run it again, or for whatever social media application HQ sees fit. The comprehensive branch achievements in 2017 have also formed the basis for this application for the Heinke Trophy 2018.



*Figure 12 Mac McCarthy, author of successful Darrol Stinton Award application, receives the trophy from Sqn Ldr Pete Maskell, Vice Chairman of RAF Sub-Aqua Association*

#### **4. GENERAL ACTIVITIES**

**Branch Meetings** The club meets every Monday at 5PM. Previously, the meeting time was 7PM, but this meant individuals had to go home after work, then return to the club. It was found by making the meeting time earlier, people were more likely to come to the club before heading home. This has led to an increase in the number of people turning up, which means more work or training can be achieved.

**Social** The branch has a very social friendly atmosphere usually revolving around the pub owned by one of the members! Traditionally, after every dive, a 'debrief' is conducted in the pub where the divers can rehydrate. Sandwiches are also supplied

by the landlord's good lady, which are a surprisingly much needed and appreciated treat after a day at sea.



*Figure 13 Post dive debrief and sandwiches*

One of our long-senior divers retired after serving 38 years in the RAF and, as is traditional in the RAF, a top table was held in his honour. A number of the dive club were invited and showed that they can scrub up well when the occasion demands.



*Figure 14 Pat Woods retirement dinner, L to R: Sid Coltman, Mac McCarthy, Mark Istance, Pat Woods, Robbie Woods, Ken Scott*

Christmas time is always a good excuse for a get-together and the club is no different. The Xmas night out usually involves a visit to a local curry house followed by a couple of drinks in our favourite pub. The organisation of the night is usually given to a younger member of the club in order to get them into the idea of organisation. All of the retired club members who still live nearby are also invited along and it is a great opportunity to catch up with old friends.





*Figure 15 Christmas drinks*

An unlikely social aspect the club is involved in, is the gymnasium. Due to the requirement to pass a strict dive medical and a fitness test, a lot of the club are regularly to be found in the Station Gym. The physical training staff regularly conducts circuit training, boxercise and spinning classes. Whenever club members are free, any of them can be found participating in these events. While it is neither pretty nor enjoyable at the time, the benefits are soon realised when the medical date becomes due. Plus, it also pays dividends when carrying cylinders, shots, fuel-cans and weight belts, etc. up and down gang-ways.

**Publicity** The branch has no real requirement to publicise itself in the way other 'normal' clubs do. We do need to justify our existence and funding, which has been mentioned earlier. To that end, the branch is engaged in the annual Lossiemouth Raft Race, which takes place each August. The safety boat and crew for the event has been supplied by the club for many years. The club has also entered a raft in the competition and has had much success in the last few years, including winning last year's race.

A photograph of one of our junior divers has been used as part of a recruiting campaign for RAF Reserves in Scotland. The Lossiemouth club has played a large part in this campaign with the provision of photographs and video footage taken during the many expeditions conducted last year. The plan is for these photographs to be made into banners and posters, which will illustrate the opportunity for Adventurous Training as part of service life.





Figure 16 Zander Finlay as part of the new RAF Reserve recruitment drive

The Club banner, Active magazine article and the photo to Scuba magazine have already been mentioned earlier on.



Figure 17 Mark Istace, raft Captain, receives the winner's trophy for the Lossiemouth Raft Race 2017 from Gp Capt P Godfrey OBE

**Inter-Branch Liaison** Lossiemouth has always been supportive of the local BSAC Branch, Bursac, Last year was no different as we supplied instructors and equipment for their Oxygen and AED courses as well as approving their own

instructors. A free venue was also made available to them to reduce any costs. A Diver Cox'n Assessment and Boat Handling course were also conducted by Lossiemouth Instructors for the benefit of Burgsac members.

The branch is instrumental in the formation of a new BSAC Branch in Elgin, which will eventually become the Moray College Sub-Aqua Club. Some Try-Dives have been conducted to recruit interested students, and the outlook is good. These Try-Dives do not come under our normal military regulations, so were conducted with the minimum of fuss.

As a result of good networking and friendships, the Inverness Club were hosting a talk by Alec Crawford, and Lossiemouth were invited to attend. Alec, was one of the driving forces behind the discovery and salvage of the Oceanic in 1973. (His wife, Moya Crawford, wrote 'Deep Water', and his diving partner, Simon Martin, wrote 'The Other Titanic'. Both make for superb reading). An excellent night was had by all and it was a good opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones.

Although not exactly branches, Lossiemouth also helped to train Army Engineers from units in Dundee and Cumbernauld to enable them to go to Belize, and Army Infantry personnel from units in Perth, Dundee, Inverness and Elgin were trained for an Expedition to Cyprus. Both expeditions were very successful, and upon their return, some of the divers who live nearby, joined the club in order to further their diving.

## **5. SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENTS**

**First Class Diver** Lossiemouth Club now has a second First Class Diver, with No. 980 gaining his award in Aug 2017. That is now 2 FCDs qualifying in the club in the last 2 years.

**Safety Awards** Two branch members were awarded BSAC Safety Awards after saving the life of a young lad who was in difficulties at Lossiemouth Harbour. Luckily, they both noticed lots of blue light activity and went to see what was happening. Upon hearing there was someone struggling to get out of the water, they immediately used the Club RIB which was nearby, and successfully recovered the lad into the boat. Copies of the Safety Awards or the Incident Report have not been attached, because they will be available from BSAC HQ if required for evidence. However, the letter of appreciation from the local police Inspector is at Annex H, (There was a mixture of incredulity and bemusement amongst the club to see that our 7M Humber RIB was described as a 'motorised dingy!').

Unfortunately, of the three individuals mentioned above, none of them could attend the DOC to be presented with their certificates in person. The reason for this is quite simple and typical of military life, they were all on duty that weekend and couldn't get the time off to attend!

**Regional Coach** Lossiemouth currently provide the Regional Coach and an Area Coach for North Scotland. Since 2010, Lossiemouth has provided 2 out of the 3 coaches in the region. In a region with a reasonable number of branches, including a

few with First Class Divers, Lossiemouth is punching well above its weight and getting deeply involved in the region for the benefit of others.

**RAF Club of the Year** The club was the winner of the RAF Darrol Stinton trophy for 2016 and received the award in Mar 2017. This achievement has been already detailed beforehand.



*Figure 18 The Lossiemouth Club is doing OK*

## **6. SUMMARY**

The RAF Lossiemouth Sub-Aqua Club has had an outstanding 2017, despite the additional regulations imposed upon us by our military status. There are some advantages over normal branches, such as funding, and expedition opportunities, but there are also many disadvantages. For example, a large book of regulations we have to abide by, classified as 'diving at work', the medicals, effectively unable to conduct Try-Dives, etc. Are we better or worse off than our civilian counterparts? It is difficult to judge, there are pros and cons. Why do we not leave military diving and join a local club? Again, it is difficult to judge? There is however, an appeal to the challenge to do everything properly and abide by the regulations. The club doesn't wilt under the red tape as many have, it embraces it. While there may be many hurdles, we strive to overcome them, in order to carry on diving. There is also an undeniable enjoyment in completing all the unseen donkey work and administration which keeps the club active and ready to dive. Furthermore, an immense amount of satisfaction and pride is gained by providing Sub-Aqua opportunities for the next generation of service divers. For this, and many other reasons, I believe the RAF Lossiemouth Sub-Aqua Club is a worthy candidate for the BSAC Heinke Trophy 2017.

C McCarthy,

A618194

On behalf of the members of Lossac 565

## **SUN, SEA AND SCALLOPS**

### **RAF LOSSIEMOUTH'S SUB-AQUA EXPED TO THE WEST COAST OF SCOTLAND**

Dundonnell is a stunning location situated amongst spectacular mountains at the southern end of Little Loch Broom, Wester Ross on the west coast of Scotland. It has been the location for an annual diving trip early each season for the RAF Lossiemouth Sub-Aqua Club since 2013.

There are a wide variety of underwater sites available such as pinnacles, walls, wrecks and slow drift dives combined with good visibility and shelter; dive sites can be found whatever the weather or wind direction. This is an ideal location for all grades of diver from those who have just started to gain experience, as well as for the more seasoned veteran.

Exercise Crafty Crofter 5 was the biggest Lossiemouth exped to Dundonnell so far, seeing a total of 18 club members participating, 5 of these were new to the sport and joining the club on exped for the first time. The large numbers meant that a great deal of planning, preparation and effort had gone into getting personnel, boats, compressors, fuel, food and all the associated kit required ready to move to the exped base. Being just over 2 hours from Lossiemouth meant that those unable to get the whole week away were able to come and go for the days that they could make which added to the complexity of the planning but enabled everyone the opportunity to join us.

Accommodation was at the Joint Service Mountain Training Centre next to the Dundonnell Mountain Rescue Team. This is an excellent facility which is surprisingly little known and is under-utilised as it provides a well equipped kitchen, a comfortable dining area, bed spaces for up to 23 divers and a very well used, spacious drying room. During previous trips friendships had been made with the locals who in turn had allowed us access to a launch site at a nearby fish farm as well as keeping the boats in the water overnight at a fisherman's moorings close to the accommodation.

As soon as everything was set up we prepared for a shakedown dive on the Friday afternoon to get the exped underway. An underwater pinnacle, known as Conger Stack, is within a mile of the moorings and provided the location for this early dive to try out drysuits and equipment as well as refresh buoyancy skills and drills. This interesting, scenic site provided sightings of dogfish, squat lobsters and octopus and yielded more than a few scallops. Some of the drysuits were found to be not too dry, so back to the drying room! Those who had purchased the O'Three Drysuit were particularly dry and smug.

Previous experience has taught us that a jetty at the north end of the loch at Badluarach provided a better boat loading point than hauling our equipment over the sand and rocks at the mooring. A good briefing is essential to ensure everyone knew which boat they were in and the order of dive to avoid chaos on the jetty particularly as this is also the ferry crossing point to the community of Scoraig, so keeping our kit together and getting off the jetty as quickly as possible would keep things sweet with the locals.

As the weather was excellent on the first full days diving the opportunity was seized to cross the 5 miles of water to the Summer Isles and dive the wreck of the large trawler the Boston Stirling. A chip pan fire had broken out on board and while the crew were distracted fighting the fire the boat ran straight into a cliff face. This led to the loss of the trawler but at least it put the fire out. This largely intact, shallow wreck was a great early dive as it tested

diver's buoyancy control as they swam around the wreck, in and out of the wheelhouse, crew accommodation and holds.

The afternoon dive close to the jetty provided a steady drift amongst some nice aquatic scenery providing sightings of seals, lobsters, flat fish and added to the haul of crabs and scallops.

The next day the weather remained good so another wreck, the Fairweather 5, was chosen as the first dive site. This intact upright trawler had also run into a rock while heading out to sea. A salvage attempt to pull the boat off the rocks backwards would have been successful except that the hatches had been left open and as water poured over the stern the boat filled with water and steadily sank. Slightly deeper than the previous days wreck, it is totally covered in soft corals and fish life, it proved to be a fantastic dive in excellent visibility and a favourite site for all. The radar, radio and seats are still in the wheel house and large shoals of Pollock lazily swim amongst the masts and winches seemingly oblivious to our presence.

After the days diving was complete relaxation was still a distant luxury as this was the opportunity to fill cylinders, replenish fuel, cook the main meal, debrief, plan and brief for the next day. Fortunately, the famous Scottish midge although ever present was not such a menace as it had been in previous years. The long days in the fresh air quickly caught up with us all leading to some early nights for our intrepid team.

As is usual on such events not everything ran smoothly. We had some issues with boat serviceability and the weather did not stay fine for us for the entire week; there were a couple of delayed starts and some changes of plan were required to keep things rolling. Despite this the trip was a great success as we managed to get a great deal of excellent diving done in wonderful surroundings and were able to advance some members through to their next diving qualifications. The good relationship between the experienced and inexperienced divers proved vital in order for those new to the sport to enjoy the whole experience above as well as below the water by clear instruction, involvement in the running of the expedit by their participation in all the associated tasks as well as a good friendly atmosphere.

Crafty Crofter 5 proved that, with no small amount of effort, there is ample opportunity to enjoy sub-aqua diving in the UK. Although swimming about below the surface looking at what the underwater world has to offer is undoubtedly a great experience it is the whole package of being in such great locations, working hard together to get into the water that makes sub-aqua diving well worthy of its AT status.....and you don't need high temperatures and skimpy wetsuits to enjoy it.



# Expeds: The Old Fashioned Way

We regularly receive copies of PXR's from expeds which are very useful in maintaining a feel for the type of diving that is going on out in the 'real world'. Unsurprisingly the vast majority are from expeds to the main locations of Cyprus, Gibraltar and (until recently :()) Ascension but we also get a smaller number are from more exotic venues such as Egypt, Belize, Philippines, Malta, Canaries and Mexico.

Although we all love overseas expeds it is also great to see a very occasional long exped to dive more local waters and we've just received an excellent example of this from the 4 units (RAF & Army) that make up the RAF Lossiemouth SAC. In late May/early Jun they took 18 personnel, 3 boats & 3 portable compressors to the AT Lodge at Dundonnell on Little Loch Broom (see map).



Dundonnell – NW of Inverness



The Lodge is at the Southern Edge of Little Loch Broom

Those divers with longer memories will recall that this is the way that many more expeds used to be done. As well as being relatively straightforward to organise, not to mention cheap, expeds like this are also an excellent way of developing people in the widest range of diving skills. Operating from small boats in UK tidal waters, particularly at unknown sites, is also fantastic Adventurous Training.



Underwater Conditions seem half decent!



Loading and unloading boats is easy & close

Although this exped was based at the AT lodge in Dundonnell there are also a number of other locations around the UK which offer opportunities for AT diving. Examples include Castlemartin (Pembrokeshire), Porthkerris (Cornwall), Balmacara (Kyle of Lochalsh), Chickerell/Wyke Regis (Weymouth) and of course [JSSADC \(Plymouth\)](#).

If you'd like information (including PXR's) on planning diving at any of these locations then please get in touch – [NAVYNPS-JSSADCOIC@mod.uk](mailto:NAVYNPS-JSSADCOIC@mod.uk)

## **JOINT SERVICE SUB-AQUA DIVING ANNUAL REPORT AND REGISTRATION FOR RAF LOSSIEMOUTH BRANCH 565 FOR THE PERIOD 1 OCTOBER 2016 TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2017**

1. **Introduction.** Over the reporting period RAF Lossiemouth has continued to grow and encourage diving within RAF Lossiemouth and 7 SCOTS thereby increasing the amount of dives and time in the water done by members on last year's figures. As a result the club was awarded the Darrel Stinton trophy for best RAF Sub Aqua Club. The make-up of the club has changed with over half of the club members now being JNCO or below with the majority of them only learning to dive this year. As a club we have trained 18 Ocean Divers with a further 5 on going. Of those 18, 9 have also completed their Sports Diver qualification with 4 on going. It is not only the basic dive level that the club do but the club has also qualified 1 Dive Leader with 2 others in the pipe line. 2 Dive Leaders are doing Advance Divers and an Advance Diver completed his First Class Diver. As a club we not only teach within the club, but have assisted Cambridge University Air Squadron, with an expedition to Ascension Island and running a Sports Diver course at Lossiemouth qualifying 3 Ocean Divers. The club has also assisted 71 Engineer Regiment in qualifying individuals prior to their overseas expedition to Belize. Although the club dives all year round, as a result of having 3 ESADS as reservists, the club has been able to do much of the training of the new divers though the week thereby allowing those qualified to dive the more interesting sites at the weekend. However, the trainee divers do join in at the weekend especially for their last couple of dives of their Ocean Divers course. This allows them to feel part of the club, but also an opportunity to experience and see other diving that takes place. Once again, for the 5<sup>th</sup> year we held our annual week's trip to Dundonnell, diving the Summer Isles, which this year saw the club taking all 3 RIBS and 18 divers, the most we have ever done. This trip is perfect for giving all level of divers the challenge of diving cold water and gaining valuable experience, not only in diving but compressor operation, boat handling, seamanship and chart work. The second annual event saw 6 divers heading for a long weekend to dive Scapa Flow, with 3 of the divers having never been before. 7 SCOTS organised an expedition to Cyprus for 12 divers with the majority of them qualifying to Sports divers, numbers included above, for which 6 are now members of the club. The club is also fortunate to have the Regional Coach for North Scotland as well as an Area coach within the club with other courses such as SDC's being conducted. The club is in a healthy position, both with members having a balance of experience including CCR and Trimix across all diving grades as well as serviceable equipment and are now concentrating on the new Level 3 questionnaire to be ready for the level 3 audit in January 2018.

## 2. Branch Details

**Unit:** RAF Lossiemouth  
**BSAC Branch Number:** 565  
**Address:** RAF Lossiemouth  
 Lossiemouth  
 Moray  
 IV31 6SD

**Overview:** The branch meets on a Mon evening from 1700hrs to 1930 hrs. Diving usually takes place at weekends throughout the year when personnel are available, however diving can be organised for weekdays if individuals have the time. Diving also takes place during the summer months in the evenings subject to availability of personnel and weather permitting.

Points of Contact	Phone	E-mail/DII
<b>Chairman:</b> Sqn Ldr Jim Metcalfe	xxx	Xxx
<b>Diving Officer:</b> Capt Ken Scott	xxx	Xxx
<b>Secretary:</b> Cpl Colin McCarthy	xxx	Xxx

## 3. Diving Statistics

### a. Number of Dives (No) and Total Minutes (Mins) Dived for Open Circuit):

Dept h(m)	Example		Air		Nitrox		Trimix	
	No.	Mins	No.	Mins.	No.	Mins.	No.	Mins.
<9	4	300	72	2033	47	1880		
9-24	7	250	368	12099	65	2528		
25-30	15	763	139	4595	2	67		
30-50	4	234	42	1500				
50-60	2	45						

### b. Number of Dives (No) and total Minutes (Mins) Dived for Closed/Semi Closed Circuit Diving:

Dept h(m)	Air		Nitrox		Trimix	
	No.	Mins.	No.	Mins.	No.	Mins.
<9						
9-24	4	167				
25-30	3	131				
30-50	11	481				
50-60						



#### 4. Membership and Qualifications

	Service Personnel	Essential Civilians	Total Qualifications Awarded During Year
<b>Total Membership</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>Broken Down By:</b>			
<b>Non-Diver</b>			
<b>Trainee</b>	<b>5</b>		
<b>Ocean Diver</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>18</b>
<b>Sports Diver</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Dive Leader</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Advance Diver</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>First Class Diver</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>1</b>
<b>Open Water Instructor</b>	<b>2</b>		
<b>Advance Instructor</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>National Instructor</b>	<b>0</b>		
<b>BSADS</b>	<b>1</b>		
<b>ESADS</b>	<b>3</b>		

**Note: Instructors and SADS are accounted for in Diver Grades.**

#### 5. Serviceable Branch Equipment

Type and Quantity	Publicly Funded	Non-Publicly Funded	Remarks
<b>Boats:</b>		3	
<b>Outboard Motors:</b>		3	
<b>Radios:</b>		5	
<b>O2 kits:</b>		2	
<b>GPS:</b>		3	
<b>Echo Sounder:</b>		3	
<b>BCDs:</b>		8	
<b>Cylinders:</b>		10	
<b>DVs:</b>		6	
<b>Dive Suits:</b>		7	
<b>Compressors</b>		4	
<b>Other: Suunto Dive Computer</b>		6	
<b>Marinox O2 Kit</b>		2	
<b>Air Purity &amp; O2 Analyser</b>	2 Air Purity	2 O2 Analyser	

#### 6. Registration for Forthcoming Year

This Branch will continue to dive under Joint Service Sub-Aqua Diving regulations and is therefore requesting registration as a member of the RAFSAA for the forthcoming year.

**Enclosure:**

Branch Site Register Including Sheltered Water Training Areas.

**Enclosure 1 to**

**Annual Branch Report and Registration format**

**Dated 30 Sep 2017**

**BRANCH SITE REGISTER INCLUDING SHELTERED WATER TRAINING AREAS**

**Branch name and BSAC number: RAF Lossiemouth – 565**

**Submitted by: Capt Ken Scott**

**Date: 30 Sep 17**

**Site Register: Lossiemouth SAC (0565) Branch Dive Sites.**

Serial (Note 1)	Site Name	Location (Note 2)	Description (note 3)	Chartered Depth	Date Last Dived by Branch
1	Lossiemouth Harbour	57 43.45N 003 16.74W	Shore	6m	21 Aug 17
2	Hopeman Reefs	57 42.10N 003 26.40W	Reef	10m	18 Feb 17
3	Burghhead Tanks	57 41.70N 003 39.65W	Wreck	12m	26 Aug 17
4	The Skerries	57 42.00N 003 19.50W	Reef	15m	9 Sep 17
5	15M Reef	57 43.10N 003 14.25W	Reef	15m	25 Sep 17
6	Boston Stirling	58.00.00N 005 24.30W	Wreck	15m	27 May 17
7	Bottle Island	57 57.52N 005 27.60W	Reef	20m	29 May 17
8	NAR	57 41.79N 003 08.01W	Wreck	15m	7 Sep 17
9	Shelbrit	57 40.10N 003 57.30W	Wreck	21m	27 Nov 16
10	Unity	57 45.31N 003 13.33W	Wreck	25m	28 Aug 17
11	Fylla	57 45.44N 003 10.01W	Wreck	30m	18 Jun 17
12	Fairweather V	57 56.35N 005 21.35W	Wreck	30m	31 May 17
13	Ardross Rock	57 54.61N 005 24.65W	Reef	25m	30 May 17
14	Port Napier	57 16.41N 005 43.17W	Wreck	30m	Nov 15
15	San Tiberico	57 46.55N 003 45.60W	Wreck	35m	27 Aug 17
16	Innis Jura	57 56.32N 005 21.17W	Wreck	35m	26 May 17
17	Jambo	58 01.18N 005 27.14W	Wreck	35m	26 May 17
18	Conger Stack	57 51.72N 005 15.78W	Reef	35m	01 Jun 17

**Notes:**

1. Use a Continuation Sheet as necessary.
2. Lat/Long or for inland sites postcode.
3. Wreck, Drift etc

### **Ex ATLANTIC MARLIN 2107 – Flt Lt Istance**

Flt Lt Istance provided outstanding support to the recent Cambridge University Air Sqn (CUAS) Sub-Aqua expedition. Istance was heavily involved from the outset of the planning/organisational phase through to return and disembarkation. His attention to detail, proactive approach and problem solving abilities are first class and were aptly demonstrated on several occasions throughout this particularly challenging expedition. However, it is his instructional ability and calm yet determined approach that reap success. He quickly mastered the peculiarities of instructing UAS students and thanks to his efforts the unit proudly holds several new and advanced sub-aqua qualifications.

Without Flt Lt Istance's exceptional assistance this expedition would not have succeeded.

R J Kellett

Sqn Ldr

OC CUAS

# Darrol Stinton Trophy

Sqn Ldr Darrol Stinton was the founding member of RAFS-AA when it was formed in the mid 1960s. On his retirement from the RAF he presented the Association with a trophy that was to be used to promote sub-aqua within the RAF. It was decided that clubs would compete for this trophy by submitting a written profile of their Club and its achievements.

RAF Clubs of all sizes and capabilities can compete for the trophy by submitting a written profile of their Club detailing it's achievements throughout the year (1 Sep – 31 Aug) in which the Award is made.

## DARROL STINTON TROPHY AWARD RULES

The Darrol Stinton Trophy Award is open to all RAFS-AA Clubs. The trophy is awarded to the Club who is judged to have demonstrated the most outstanding performance throughout the year. Entries should take the form of a written and illustrated submission and be received by the RAFS-AA Awards Officer **no later than 30 Sep in the Award Year.**

This Award has a deliberately flexible submission format to allow members to produce a presentation which sells their Club and demonstrates their particular strengths and achievements.

The Darrol Stinton Trophy is retained by the winning Club for a year. A RAFS-AA Plaque is awarded to a selected runner-up.

The Award is judged against these main criteria:

- a. **The submission must not exceed 3000 words (approximately 5 typewritten sides of A4),** however, the word count does not include magazine articles, letters from other parties outside the Club, or expedition reports included in support of the submission, although they should be viewed in that supporting context and not overshadow the submission itself. The words used may be spread throughout the submission in the form of reports, captions and notes. **The submission should show the word count at the end of the document.**
- b. The submission **should include an introduction by the Club OIC** which gives a broad overview of the club and highlights any significant issues it has encountered and overcome. In order to retain the flexible approach, **there are no**



**other mandatory topics.** However, to give an idea of topics it may be helpful to include, the following areas may be covered:

- Membership. Is the membership fairly static or has there been a change during the year? Has the Club had to train a lot of novices without many experienced divers?  
What qualifications have been gained?
- Diving - What sort of diving has been carried out and how often? How many divers take part in Club diving activities and what percentage of the total membership is this? Where does the Club normally dive and why?
- Expeditions - Does the Club organise regular weekend or longer expeditions and how does the level of adventure compare with the size of the Club?
- Equipment - What equipment has been recently acquired and by what means? Was it self-financed or purchased with the aid of grants or loans?
- Outside Assistance - Has the Club given any assistance to outside agencies?
- Pictures - Presentations may be improved with the addition of a few photographs, drawings, graphics, etc.

In summary, the submission should be judged on the quality of a Club's overall achievement, not just the number of dives or a professionally designed masterpiece. Even if a Club only has a few members, it should still stand an equal chance of winning.





DARROL STINTON  
AWARD 2016  
RAF LOSSIEMOUTH  
SUB-AQUA CLUB APPLICATION

## INTRODUCTION

The Lossiemouth Sub-Aqua Club has had an outstanding year, due to a combination of excellent weather, full serviceability of all club kit, and the availability of a large number of keen divers. The first dive of the year took place in early January, and we never really stopped, diving still being conducted in December. A variety of different sites provide for all tastes, whether experienced or trainee divers, as are different styles of diving, e.g., single cylinder, Twinset, Accelerated decompression, and CCR. Different gases such as air, Nitrox or Trimix for back gas or deco cylinder are also available for those who wish to use them.

## DIVING

Normally, weather or non-availability of personnel conspire to make sure that only a couple of the further flung, larger, deeper wrecks tend to be visited in any one dive season. 2016, however saw all of these visited. The wrecks of the Verona, San Tiburcio and the Tantivy all lie quite a distance from Lossiemouth Harbour, yet these were visited on numerous occasions. The wrecks of the Unity and the Nar, which lie closer to Lossiemouth, proved excellent alternatives when heading out to sea was prohibitive and were also dived on numerous occasions.

After receiving co-ordinates of an un-dived oil tanker wreck, the club decided to look for it. Expecting to spend hours or days searching, imagine the surprise when it was found pretty much straight away. Several visits have been made to this wreck, partly due to the abundance of things to see, and its depth of 18m is ideal for Ocean Divers.

Apart from traditional ship-wrecks, there are plenty of reefs which are profuse with sea-life and a program of exploring likely looking areas has shown that the coverage of reefs in the Moray Firth is more extensive than charts show.

Despite having a comprehensive gas-blending capacity, most diving tends to be on air, with a few opting for Nitrox blends and a couple of rebreathers.

One reason we achieved so many dives was by keeping one of the RIBS berthed in the harbour throughout the season. This certainly made setting out to sea a swift and painless task, and it was the same with the post-dive admin. The boat being in the harbour also allowed ad-hoc diving to be conducted with very little notice during summer evenings as we could take advantage of current weather conditions. Because of good inter-personal relations with the Marina Manager, we were offered this as a free facility, saving us £100's in berthing fees.

In the 2016 annual club report to RAFS-AA, the club reported 613 dives completed or 21,398 minutes in water.

## TRAINING

Training is conducted for all grades of diver throughout the entire BSAC DTP and we have a constant influx of people interested in learning to dive. Hopefully this trend will continue as Lossiemouth continues to grow. The pool at Kinloss Barracks is now open again, which gives us much more flexibility for pool lessons, and is also free. We have successfully qualified 5 Ocean Divers for the club, 5 for Cambridge University

Air Squadron (CUAS) and the club has 9 more at various stages in the course. We also qualified 2 Sports Divers (a third qualified on Maltese Eagle) and 3 from CUAS. Hopefully as this is written, we will also qualify 1 x Advanced Diver who is keen to become an ESADS. There is an upcoming Ocean Diver course which will be held together with the local civilian club, so we can reduce the amount of duplication of lessons, and maximise the availability of instructors.

At the top end of the training scale, we had 1 x qualify as a First Class Diver and is now beginning the journey to qualify as a National Instructor. Another has almost completed the final module for First Class Diver. A Sports Diver attended an Instructor Foundation Course, and 2 x Advanced Instructors attended Instructor Trainer Development Courses, allowing them to get involved nationally in the BSAC Instructor Training Scheme. The qualified First Class Diver has already been on the staff of an IFC held in Plymouth and is due to take part in the Mar 2017 event.

As part of Station Force Development days, try-dives have been offered to Station personnel which will be conducted by club members and using club kit. The Station PEd Flt also host open days showing off all Station clubs and activities. The Sub-Aqua club always put on a good show with the RIBs, rebreathers, kit and videos. Hopefully, engaging with Station in both of these activities will enhance our good reputation further, and increase recruitment into diving.

## CLUB HOUSE

The Club House is an old Rapier training dome, which offers lots of room for most club kit. An old building, a lot of self-help & DIY has been done to make it fit for purpose, with old air-conditioning systems being demolished and the resultant holes patched up and made weather-tight.

One of the issues the club used to have was post-dive kit washing. It was a difficult balance of people taking kit away to wash it, then forgetting to bring it back, or a lack lustre rinse then left in the club. Now, due to more self-help & DIY, we have an ingenious and very efficient system - an old IBC with the lid cut off is fed by rainwater, ensuring a plentiful supply of clean fresh water. Kit can now be washed thoroughly and kept in the club, making the Equipment Officers job easier in tracking kit, and it's better for kit serviceability.

Previously, surplus ISO containers were sourced and placed near the dome as stores for fuel, compressors and expedition kit. Another ISO container has now been sourced and has been placed beside the dome. This one is used to store the club dry-suits and BCDs. Lighting and heating was professionally installed in this store and, again, due to good working relationships with others, was cost-free. Now that we have a heated store-room, it's clear to see the difference in serviceability of the BCDs and suits – especially the latex seals.

It should not be underestimated just how much hard graft and effort went into getting the dome patched, the new ISO wired up and getting the kit wash working.

## EXPEDITIONS

The club has undertaken, or been involved in a number of UK based and overseas expeditions in the reporting year.

- Mar 2016 Malta with CUAS. The club provided 2 x ESADS and an Advanced Instructor enabling the expedition to take place.
- May 2016 Dundonnell on the West coast of Scotland. An AT lodge at the south end of Little Loch Broom provides an outstanding location for Sub Aqua. Magazine articles written about this trip are attached.
- Sept 2016 Croatia. ESADS, compressor and kit supplied to 7 Scots to help them with an AT event on their Annual Camp.
- Sept 2016 Scapa Flow. Being geographically close to Scapa, it is possible to drive up for a long weekend
- Nov 2016 Balmacara House. Sadly, cancelled for service reasons by Balmacara at the last minute.
- Feb 2017 Balamacara House. Last weekend booked for a consolidated Ocean Diver course.
- Mar 2017 Ascension Island with CUAS. A couple of senior divers are assisting with the supervision and conduct of the expedition.
- 

## MEMBERSHIP

Club membership currently stands at 32 members. This number fluctuates up and down regularly and is consistent with the transient nature of Service life, postings, detachments, etc. This includes regulars and reservists from both the RAF and the Army. Out of that number, we are lucky to have 9 x instructors, 4 of whom are Advanced, 3 x ESADS, and 1 x BSADS.

Diver grades range from Ocean Divers under training to First Class Diver, and military ranks range from LAC to Wing Commander. The BSAC Local Area Coach is also a member of the branch, which makes it easier for us to engage with local civilian dive clubs.

Vocationally within the branch, we have an IDEST approved SCUBA Technician, a First Aid Instructor, a welder, a nurse, and a pub landlord! This broad range of skill sets ensures the club is always operating at maximum efficiency.

## BOATS

One of the many benefits of having reservists in the club is that they provide a ready pool of man-power with plenty time to spare. This has helped the club immeasurably by ensuring that the club RIBs and ancillaries are always serviceable and fit for sea. Any problems which occur are dealt with immediately ensuring that diving operations are not compromised.

A new item of equipment purchased recently was a battery charging/maintenance system. The RIB batteries are connected to the charger which ensures they are always in optimum condition, so doing away with the dramas involved in starting engines after being sat idle for a while.

Recent problems with the VHF radio sets were stumping all club members and even Station radio technicians were unable to help. Again, through good inter-personal relations, contact was made with a local group of radio enthusiasts. They immediately looked at the faulty radios, diagnosed the faults, then helped us to fix them. Furthermore, they even identified issues with co-axial cables and earths which hadn't even become problematic yet, allowing us to replace these components so that we now have constant communications with both base stations and hand-held sets.

## AID TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The summer season afforded certain club members the opportunity to help out various individuals who found themselves in need of diver support. On more than one occasion, separate fishing boats had managed to get ropes tangled around their propeller. All propellers were freed in short time to the relief of the fishermen.

On another occasion, a gold chain of immense sentimental value was reported lost in the harbour by an upset member of the public. Again, in a short space of time, the jewellery was found, aided by the use of a newly acquired underwater metal detector.

The strangest day had to be when responding to reports of a lost anchor and a set of false teeth – both from the same yacht! Again, in a short space of time, both items were recovered and returned to their owners, although the teeth needed a clean before being replaced!

After the radio enthusiasts last visit when they finalised perfecting our VHF sets, it transpired that they were also aircraft enthusiasts. As they would not accept payment for their services, it was decided to organise a visit to the Tornado simulator, including a flight, for them. It goes without saying that if the club was not held in such high esteem by stake-holders in the local community, then activities like this would just not be possible.

To reassure everybody, all the above dives were conducted 'privately' by club members, appropriate surface support was in place and no reward was accepted (other than the satisfaction of having done a good job helping people out, and having a strange tale to tell!)

## SUMMARY

A phenomenal amount of continuous hard work has been done to improve the club infrastructure and to keep equipment serviceable and fit for purpose. This effort and drive has been fundamental in creating the vibrant fully functioning club which we have at the moment. Without this volunteer ethos and love of the sport, it is unlikely that we would have managed to achieve as much as we did in 2016.

I wholeheartedly believe that the RAF Lossiemouth Sub-Aqua Club has gone above and beyond that which is required to win the Darrol Stinton Award.

Mac McCarthy

RAF Lossiemouth Sub-Aqua Club



## GALLERY



*Traditional post dive debrief*

*L – R, Ken Scott, Pat Woods, Mark Istance, Robbie Woods, Mac McCarthy*



*Misty sending the shot up on our 'new' wreck*



*L to R, RIBs Nimrod and Tornado moored in Little Loch Broom*



*The recovered gold chain and metal detector*





*Fault fixing at Dundonnel*  
*L-R, William Lay, Ken Scott*



*Xmas drinks*  
*L-R, Billy Bohill, Ken Scott, Dave Whitehall, Angie Hopkinson, Tony Wilson*

6 September 2017

Your Ref: Mark Instance  
and Mike Mason

RAF Sub Aqua Team  
RAF Lossiemouth  
Lossiemouth  
IV31 6SD



North East Division  
31a Clifton Road  
Lossiemouth  
IV31 6DJ

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Dear Mark and Mike

I am writing to you to thank you for your prompt and decisive actions on 27 August 2017 when you assisted in the saving of a young man's life who had jumped into the harbour at Lossiemouth. Without your decisive actions, I have little doubt, the outcome would have ended in tragedy.

I am grateful that you had the presence of mind to volunteer your services and in particular the use of your motorised dingy. I am informed that the youth had been in the water for some considerable time and his core body temperature had fallen to 34 degrees. The use of your vessel saved vital minutes and undoubtedly contributed to the swift and full recovery made by him.

I was made aware of your brave actions by the attendant Police Officers at the scene and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you on behalf of Police Scotland for your praiseworthy actions.

Yours sincerely

David Hoyle  
Inspector  
Lossiemouth Police Office