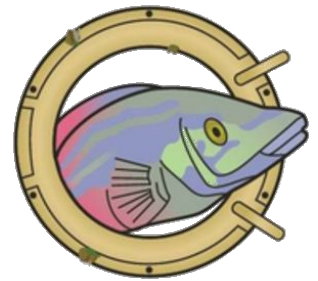


# HEINKE AWARD 2022



# Aberdeen Sub-Aqua Club



# Contents



01

## Foreword

3

Endorsements from  
Rob Kirkpatrick  
Dave Sydenham

3

4

02

## Introduction

5

Our achievements in 2022

7

03

## Training

8

Our Mission  
Ocean Diver training  
Experienced Diver training  
Other Courses

8

9

11

13

04

## Diving

14

Local Area Background  
Dive Management  
Dive Trips and Expeditions  
Special Projects

15

17

17

23

05

## Our Club

25

Club Organisation  
Membership  
Communications and  
Technology  
Promotion

25

29

32

35

06

## Activities

37

Publicity  
Social  
Inter-branch liaison  
Environment

37

37

38

40

07

## Final Thoughts

41

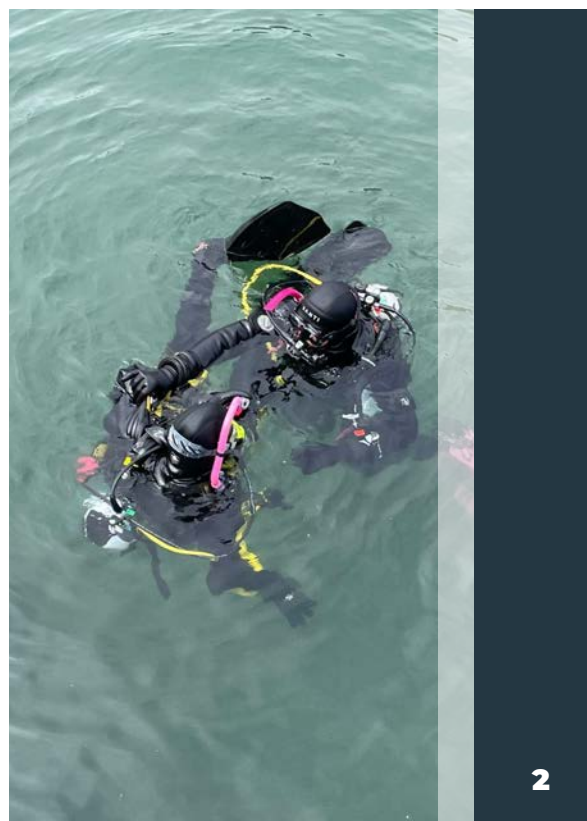
The club members speak  
Next steps  
Acknowledgements  
References and links

42

51

53

53



# Foreword

**Rob Kirkpatrick**

**Enthusiastic Diver and former BSAC Council Member**

*The Heinke Trophy is all about recognising the contribution that members and clubs make to the growth of scuba diving and, not in any way to downplay the excellent work of other members and clubs. I cannot think of a finer example of the determination, focus, commitment and delivery than that displayed by Aberdeen Sub-Aqua Club in its drive to promote diving. My time as a BSAC Council member provided a unique insight into these very same factors and based on that I can say unhesitatingly that Aberdeen Sub-Aqua Club epitomises the aspirations of BSAC. More than that, it delivers and, not content with that, plans to continue its very impressive growth and improvement trajectory.*

*In less than 5 years, through quite tumultuous times faced by us all, Aberdeen Sub-Aqua Club has grown its membership by 500% from 15 to 90 members. It did that by involving all members in setting the strategic direction and then making it happen. It was and still is all about member involvement. Recognising that training and development was to be at the core, it set about supporting, growing and enabling its pool of instructors. This further enabled attraction of members as it now had the ability to deliver. It then looked at training methods and how to use technology to best effect, not only in the realm of training but to ensure effective, open and transparent communication across the membership and externally for the purpose of marketing. Last but certainly not least, significant effort went into building a truly inclusive culture incorporating the Diving for All ethos.*

*Aberdeen Sub-Aqua Club is a BSAC role model in so many respects and I commend it to the committee for the 2023 award of the Henke Trophy.*

## **Dave Sydenham**

### **BSAC National Instructor Chief Examiner**

*The work and dedication which Aberdeen Sub-Aqua Club have shown over the last few years through the pandemic and since, is truly outstanding. I've known the branch since my time as Regional Coach in 2001 and seen them go from a once thriving and active club to one I worried might not survive as membership had dropped so low. Then a few years ago to my surprise and delight, on an Instructor Foundation Course I was teaching on were a number of members of BSAC 67. I then bumped into them again for a Try Dive Session during the Jubilee Weekend showcasing Stonehaven Open Air Pool. It was at this meeting over lunch Jim Burke told me of all the work going on and the formation of the Junior section and I decided to get more involved.*

*I've been so impressed at where the branch has taken things in such a short time, to go from rock bottom, to a branch with more trainees than a lot of branches have members, whilst at the same time running some pretty impressive expedition and exploration diving, locating many unknown and undiscovered wrecks. The diversity within the branch is fantastic and just the sheer enthusiasm of everyone involved is something very special.*

*There's a real family feel to the branch where everyone is made to feel welcome, whether a diver or not. Everyone is so friendly and there is a wealth of experience to draw from with some extremely experienced and knowledgeable divers as well as the keenness and exuberance of the newer Instructors and those up and coming.*

*As someone who has spent the last few years training and examining divers at the higher end of the experience ladder, Aberdeen Sub-Aqua Club has reawakened my passion for branch diving and training. I've really enjoyed working with the branch over the last year and learned a great deal from them, so I'd like to say big thanks to everyone in the branch for that. I look forward to diving and training with them a lot more over the coming years.*

*In 40 years of diving, I've never seen anything quite like what Aberdeen Sub-Aqua Club have achieved in such a short time, and their ambitious strategy leaves me in no doubt there is plenty yet to come for this thriving branch. As such, I believe they would be very worthy recipients of the Heinke Trophy for demonstrating the very best of what the British Sub-Aqua Club is all about.*

# Introduction

Aberdeen Sub-Aqua Club was first established in 1958 and is now one of the oldest clubs in Scotland. Historically, the club has been very active, with dive trips and community events in abundance. Yet despite this, in recent years, membership had declined and by the end of 2018, just 9 diving members remained in the club and we were unable to offer any training. The club's boat had been sold to cut costs and consequently, activity was limited to shore diving and two or three annual trips away. In 2019, we were able to purchase a small inflatable and attract a few new experienced divers to the club but in 2020 diving and training was still very limited and set back even further by the pandemic.

Recognising this situation, in early 2021, the club members developed a three-year strategy to reinvent the club, with a vision to play a leading role in the development of SCUBA diving in North-East Scotland.

[See Our Three-Year Strategy Here](#)

This strategy outlined how we planned to grow a diverse membership, provide more training to a wider audience, build a respectful, inclusive and fun social scene, care for the environment, work with other clubs, reduce the costs of diving, contribute to the wider society and, ultimately, participate in more diving, exploring new and exciting places. At the heart of the strategy lay innovation. Innovation in training, diving and the use of technology to support existing and prospective club members.

In 2022, two years into our three year plan, despite interference from Covid and the cost of living crisis, we have achieved significant progress in delivering our vision and have already surpassed most of the targets we set for 2023.

We, the members, are extremely proud of our 2022 achievements, and the foundations that we have laid for further successes in 2023 and beyond. We hope, in reading this report, you will see what makes us so proud and that you consider our efforts and success worthy of the Heinke Trophy.



The compilation of this report has been a truly collaborative effort, involving a wide group of the Aberdeen Sub-Aqua Club members, whether through writing, information gathering, idea formation, photographing, editing, graphic design or discussion. We have loved every minute of reflecting on the work of the club which we are so proud to be a part of.

**[Click Here to Watch Club Members Diving in 1960](#)**

National Library of Scotland  
Moving Image Archive



# Our Achievements in 2022

- ✓ Increased club membership by 65%
- ✓ Increased the proportion of women in the club from 20% to 41%
- ✓ Increased our U18 divers headcount from 2 to 14
- ✓ Started a DFA program, delivering Try Dives to 5 disabled people, two of whom joined the club
- ✓ Took on 22 new Ocean Diver trainees
- ✓ Fundamentally changed the way the club trains, operates and dives
- ✓ Doubled our instructor headcount
- ✓ Reduced our trainee attrition to 10%
- ✓ Made a £5000 investment to double the amount of rescue and dive equipment available to trainees
- ✓ Doubled the number of dives made by club members
- ✓ Ran 9 dive expeditions for club members
- ✓ Took part in a series of environmental projects, from Operation Oyster to Microplastics research
- ✓ Discovered and positively identified 5 previously un-dived shipwrecks
- ✓ Held membership subscriptions at the same level for a 5th year running
- ✓ Introduced membership discounts affecting 30% of club members
- ✓ Changed our committee membership to 50% female and 30% new members
- ✓ Raised £1700 to fund DFA activities
- ✓ Delivered 88 Try Dives
- ✓ Introduced a suite of new, free technology to support existing and prospective club members
- ✓ Continued to build close relationships and work with other local diving clubs

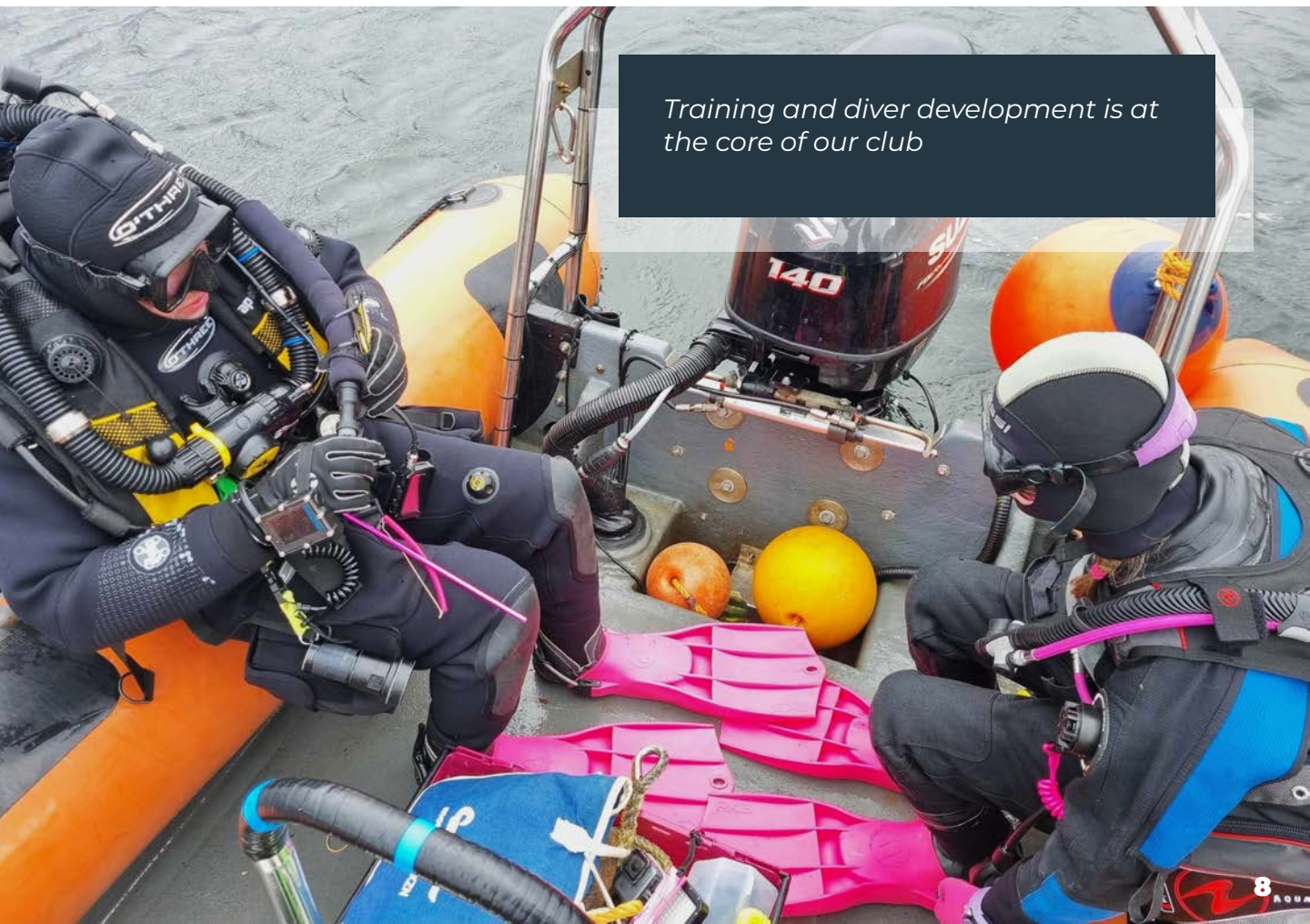
# Training

## Our Mission

Our mission is to play a leading role in the development of SCUBA diving in the North East of Scotland. To do this, we must deliver high quality, comprehensive training, in a greater volume, but first we had to overcome a number of challenges.

We started from a difficult position in 2020, with only one Open Water Instructor and three assistant instructors. Our ability to train and develop new members was very limited. Recognising this we encouraged all members, who were able, to attend IFC, OWIC and take TIE/PIE. The committee agreed to provide a further incentive by offering a 50% subsidy on course costs.

By the start of 2022, we had increased our OWI numbers to 4, and AIs to 6. During 2022, 5 more club members attended IFC and we recruited 3 Advanced Instructors together with the support of a locally based National Instructor. We were therefore in a much better position to take on higher volumes of trainees.



*Training and diver development is at the core of our club*



# Ocean Diver Training

Our training aim was to be able to accept and train everyone who expressed an interest in learning to dive with us, regardless of age and ability and background.

Conscious of the strong interest generated through our Try Dives and DFA program, we needed to get innovative with the way we delivered our training. Even with all of our new instructors, our previous ad-hoc model for training could not accommodate all of those who wanted to learn to dive.

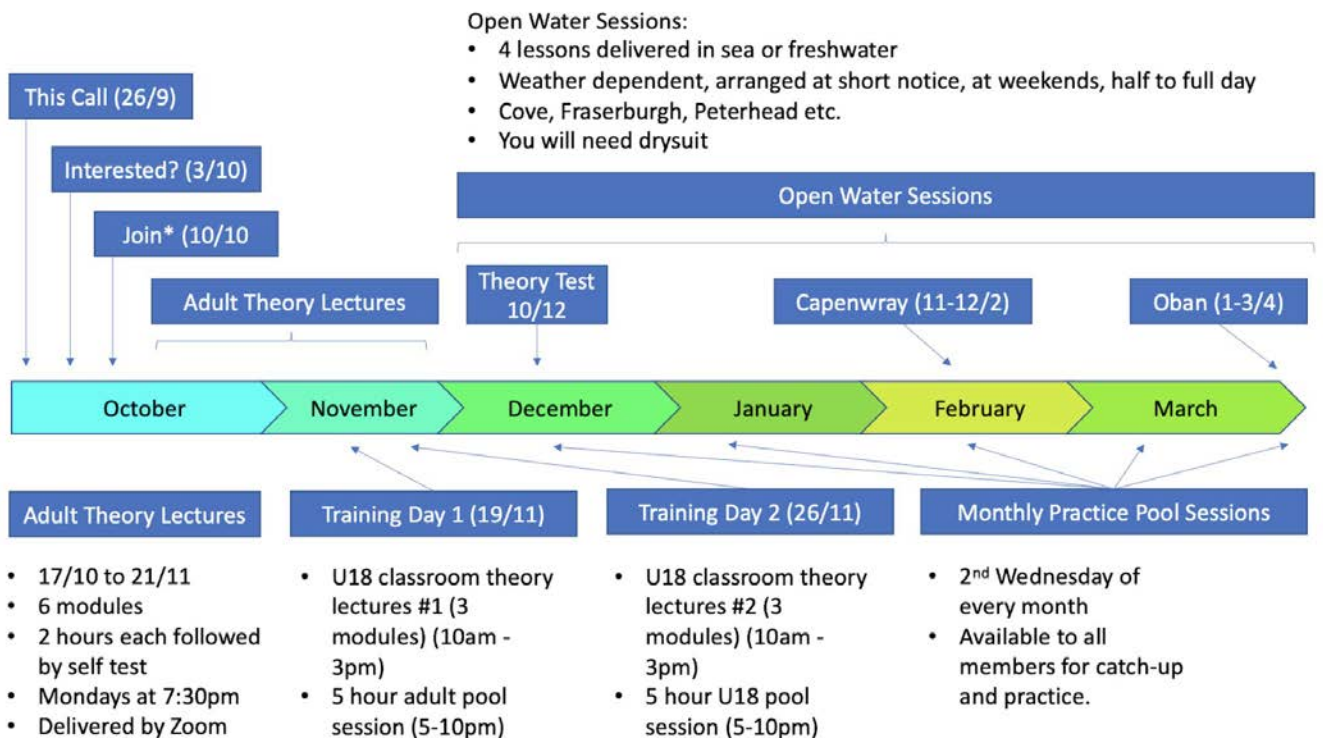
We suspected “instructor fatigue” might be an issue - with instructors spending all their time training and not enough time working on their own diving and development. Additionally, we experienced a high drop-out rate (around 50%) of Ocean Diver trainees taken on in 2021, our analysis of the causes identified unexpected costs and inability to meet training commitments as a major cause of this - especially for offshore workers. Lastly, our access to weekday pool facilities for training was limited to a single two hour session once a month, so Ocean Diver pool training would take around 5-6 months and be complicated to schedule and support, not to mention expensive with pool fees and equipment rentals.

An underwater photograph showing several divers in a pool. They are wearing full diving gear, including masks, snorkels, and fins. The water is clear and blue. The divers are positioned at various depths and are engaged in what appears to be a training exercise. The lighting is soft, and the overall atmosphere is calm and focused.

We came up with an approach which optimised our resources and would allow us to train up to 30 new divers per year.

We established an annual plan for training, which would involve concentrated training delivery in the winter months completing the majority of training by early spring. This would allow our instructors to focus on training while opportunities for open water diving was limited by the weather but give them greater freedom to dive in the summer season. We moved to a single intake of trainees, in October, which would make training organisation much more simple as we could then focus on a single, large group for training events.

We set out a detailed week by week training plan for the training months, which we shared with our prospective 2022 trainees in a Zoom session. On the call we discussed local diving, experiences of our 2021 trainees (we had some join the call), we talked about the training timetable, time commitment and costs. This really helped set the expectations of the group, we had over 30 attendees on the call and 22 new trainees signed up as a result.



We planned all our theory lessons to be by Zoom and built some technology to support understanding and revision remotely. We created online quizzes and revision tests that could be accessed remotely and on a variety of devices. They provide immediate feedback to the trainees but also allow our instructors to identify individuals who might be struggling with theory or areas of training which are not well understood and we planned our theory test revision lectures to focus on these areas.

While Zoom and revision support was beneficial for all trainees, it specifically helped our offshore workers and parents who could not commit to weekly face to face sessions.

We felt that U18s might struggle to focus during Zoom calls, especially our group of U14s so we held two 3-hour classroom sessions in a local school and delivered face to face lectures and revision tests. This was a more familiar environment to learn for those still at school and also helped the instructors to get a better feel for the level of understanding in the group.

We grouped our pool lessons into four 5-hour marathon sessions and held these as specifically commissioned Saturday night pool bookings. This concentrated our pool training effort, reduced time commitment from instructors and gave greater flexibility to offshore workers. It also reduced training costs as these sessions were significantly cheaper pool slots and involved less equipment rentals for trainees. We provided monthly catch-up pool sessions for those that needed more time to complete the training.

Open water and drysuit familiarisation sessions were held in the local quarry. Finally, we organised a dedicated open water training long weekend in Oban to concentrate on Ocean Diver and Sports Diver certification.

During 2022 we trained 28 Ocean Divers (6 completed training started in 2021 and 22 started new training in October). Our drop-out rate on the 2022 intake reduced to 10%.

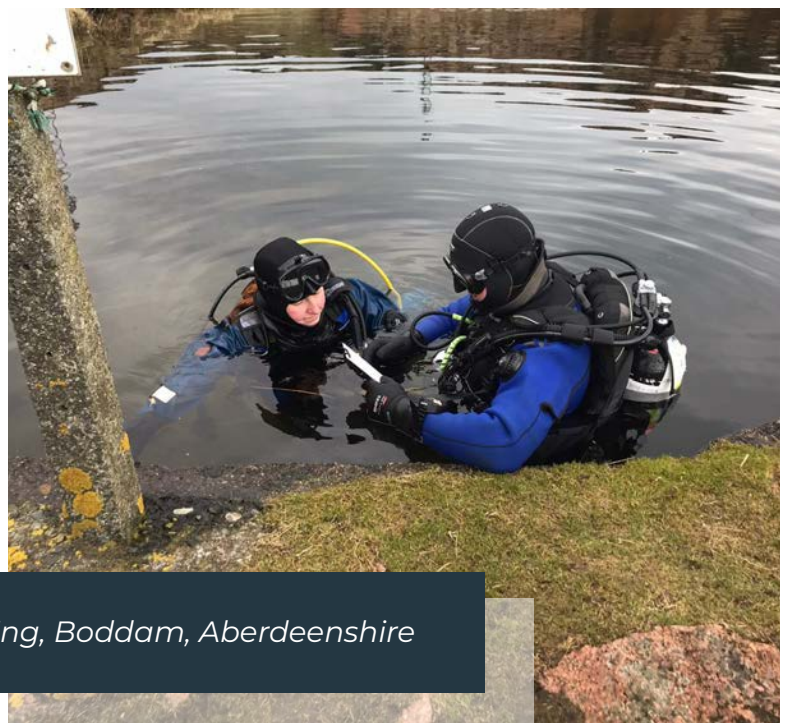
## Experienced Diver Training

In addition to Ocean Diver training, we ran Advanced Ocean Diver, Sports Diver, Dive Leader and Advanced Diver training.

We have introduced online training records for all trainees in a format which allows us to easily see training and experience gaps across the complete training group. This allows us to plan dive trips and training days so that we can cover lessons and experience dives to move the trainees forward to certification.

## Advanced Ocean Diver Training

We engaged with this new qualification and ran training alongside that for our Sports Diver training. We certified two new Advanced Ocean Divers in 2022.



*Quarry Training, Boddam, Aberdeenshire*

## **Sports Diver Training**

We assigned ownership of Sports Diver training to one of our most experienced instructors. The intent was for them to own and coordinate all aspects of the training to maximise the opportunities for trainees to qualify. This involved coordinating all of the theory lectures and creating Sports Diver specific training days to cover practical and open water training.

Additionally, we helped the Aberdeen University Club by inviting their Sports Diver candidates to our online theory lectures - once again showing the flexibility and benefits of online theory delivery.

Throughout 2022 we certified two Sports Divers and completed theory lessons for another 13 candidates. Open water training for the remaining candidates has since taken place in early 2023.

## **Dive Leader Training**

Ownership for Dive Leader training was given to another experienced instructor. In 2022 we completed theory lectures and practical lessons for 6 Dive Leader trainees.

We ran an excellent joint Practical Rescue Management all day course together with Ellon BSAC. 12 of our club members attended a morning session in the local church hall where we covered safety and rescue theory lessons, BLS and Oxygen administration. In the afternoon we moved to the coast where we ran a very realistic Practical Rescue Management session and covered multiple rescue scenarios. The day was really informative and great fun.

One Dive Leader qualified in early 2023 with the remainder continuing to work through their experience dives in 2023.

## **Advanced Diver Training**

Dave Sydenham (National instructor) took up ownership of our Advanced Diver program and combined the training with other local clubs. Advanced Diver lectures were completed for 6 members and practical sessions organised.

We have one club member begin training for First Class Diver in 2022 and hopes to gain the certification in 2023.

## Other Courses

We supported and delivered other courses and training in 2022.

5 club members attended IFC, 2 attended OWIC, and 4 attended the DFA Dive Manager and Buddies SDC to help us with our DFA program. The club also delivered compressor familiarisation, boat handling and VHF Basics and ran an inhouse Rebreather Buddies session for buddy pairing with a CCR diver.



We organised first aid training for club members. This covered Scene Assessment, Barrier Use, Primary Assessment, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), Serious Bleeding Management, Shock Management, Spinal Injury Management, Conscious and Unconscious Choking Management.

## Training Equipment

We maintain a stock of club equipment which we make available on a rental basis to trainees and members who have not yet assembled all of their own equipment. We have kept the cost of equipment rental at £20 for a full set including air for 5 years. In 2022, we invested £5,000 of club funds to modernise and increase our stock to accommodate the large intake of new trainees.

We bought 6 new regulators and BCDs, 6 tanks and ancillary training equipment such as compasses, DSMBs, and reels. We now have 12 full sets of equipment and 18 cylinders.

In addition we purchased a 2nd, more modern resuscitation doll with performance feedback and a third Oxygen Administration set. We introduced a more rigorous asset register for all our equipment and this has been linked to scans of all test, servicing and air purity certificates. It gives us a good record of what has been completed and helps to plan annual outgoings on servicing and testing.

We have also been innovative in our approach to reuse and recycling of old equipment. In 2022, we obtained a discarded 9 cfm compressor from a scrap yard and our engineer was able to complete full repairs. It is now our main club compressor. We have also obtained two more defunct compressors destined for scrap and these are currently under repair. The club now has 4 compressors.

# Diving



In 2022 club members safely completed 979 dives in Scotland and beyond. Dive locations ranged from Orkney and St Kilda and stretched as far as the Maldives. This was made possible thanks to the comprehensive training, preparation and planning that the club provided. The club worked hard to offer an inclusive dive calendar with diving to suit all abilities from our newly qualified Ocean Divers to our mixed gas and CCR divers.

The coastline of Scotland stretches for over 10,000 kilometres, encompassing a diverse range of dive sites that cater to all levels of experience. From the Orkney Islands in the north, to the Isle of Arran in the South-West, and Firth of Forth in the South-East. The club aims to capitalise on what is available on our doorstep through a mixture of local diving, day trips and expeditions with club dives organised, where weather permits, a minimum of one per week throughout the year. A benefit of living so far North and on the coast, is during the summer, the long hours of daylight allow for 'mid-week, after work dives'.

The club has a diverse membership based throughout the Aberdeenshire community. Due to the offshore energy sector being so prevalent in the area, many club members work rotations offshore and are only stationed in Aberdeen for short periods of time, meaning it can be difficult to get everyone together simultaneously. We also have a steady turnover of club members as people transition to and from the area for work.



Scotland's diving conditions can be challenging due to its colder waters (6-14° C), rapidly changing visibility, unpredictable weather, 3-4m tidal range and strong tides as well as an unpredictable haar (sea mist) all of which place restrictions on dive planning with many trips needing to be planned, organised and then executed at short notice when conditions are suitable. The club owns and operates its own 5.2m inflatable boat and two members have their own RIBs which are also used for club trips.

We use every opportunity during scheduled dives to deliver training and experience dives necessary for next level certification; an online training record which is available to all dive planners and managers supports this.

## Local Area Background

Most local diving is completed from a number of convenient sites such as Cove Harbour which is a protected harbour just south of the city and provides a variety of diving including the remains of the Countess of Aberdeen which sank in 1894. Stonehaven, Catterline and Peterhead also provide great diving with their rocky coastlines and steep cliffs making for dramatic diving. The Moray coast approximately one hour to the north of Aberdeen is particularly renowned for its seal colonies, where divers can observe these playful creatures in their natural habitat. The club organised numerous trips to the Moray coast in 2022 with a mixture of shore and boat diving.

Boats are generally launched from Rosehearty which allows dives below the huge cliffs with their bird colonies at Strathangles and Troup Head where seals, lobster, swimming guillemots, and nudibranchs are regularly sighted. Average depths in the area are 12-15m making the diving accessible for all levels of diver.

Club members have also explored some of the more remote wrecks with several new marks successfully being dived and identified.

No Aberdeen diving article can fail to mention the delights of Boddam quarry from where most of the granite for Peterhead prison was quarried. The quarry now provides an ideal all-weather training environment as it consists of a number of pits ranging from 6m to 24m which the club uses for training, equipment testing and keeping 'dive fit' with weekly dives in the long winter months where temperatures can dip to as low as 2 degrees celsius at the bottom. The abandoned burger van at 15m remains a rite of passage for the true north-east diver and the warmth of the fire-pit and sausages afterwards are well earned.

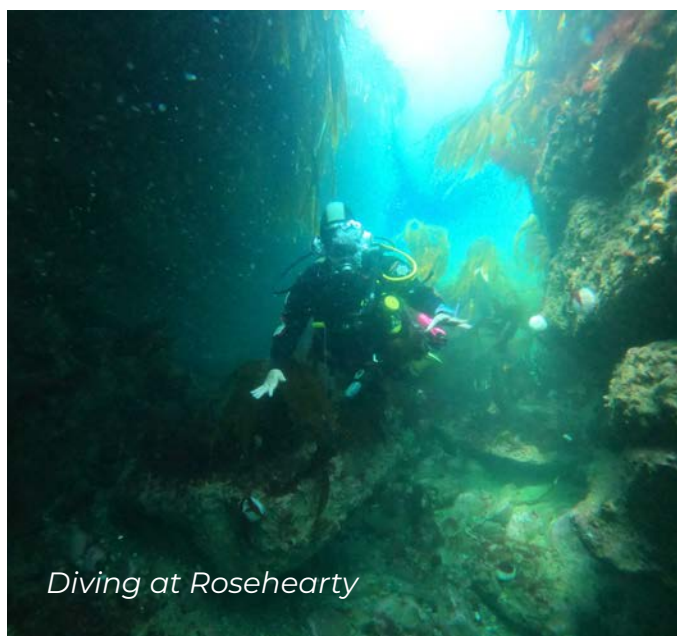
The club also travelled further inland to dive the Linn O Dee in the Cairngorms National Park to dive in the peat tinted river Dee where eels, trout and salmon were observed.



*Night Dive at Boddam Quarry*



*Local Sea Life*



*Diving at Rosehearty*



*Winter Diving*



*Local Sea Life*



# Dive Management

The club uses a dedicated and very active Slack social media platform which replaced the club Whatsapp group we were previously using. Now 'channels' can be dedicated to specific topics and trips making sure messages are not 'lost in the noise'. All proposed dives are posted on the club's dedicated **#dive-planning** channel and made available to everyone in the club. To be included in the dive plans, members simply respond positively to the post. This way, we avoid the formation of diving cliques and make life simpler for the dive planners.

All dives are planned by the Dive Manager to be as inclusive as possible, with input from all participants and support from the Diving Officer as necessary. One task that was carried out in 2022 was to produce a simplified 'Dive Management Guide' detailing which qualification levels can dive to what depth, with whom, and who can organise to clarify restrictions and ease the planning burden. The production of detailed risk assessments for both open water and pool diving, and dive planning templates also assisted in streamlining the dive planning process. The club has a dedicated Dive Marshal box which is taken on all dives. The box contains Risk Assessments, site maps, briefing templates and emergency procedures as well as First Aid kit, Emergency O2 and an Automated External defibrillator (AED) which was purchased in 2022.

## Dive Trips and Expeditions

Whilst the club has an active weekly local dive programme, we also organise weekend and longer trips for members to explore other areas of Scotland and further afield. Part of the three-year strategy was to offer a more varied exploration calendar and in 2022 our nine expeditions included:

### Oban



A training week in Oban which is now an annual event and mainly focused on completing Ocean Diver training (for those that have done theory and pool work over the winter) and then skills and development training for Sports Divers and above. In 2022 some club members continued on to participate in Operation Oyster. The Oban trip was attended by 22 divers from the club and three new Ocean Divers completed their training during the trip. The SS Breda, which is the focal point of the club's annual trip to Oban, is outstanding; this relatively intact 120m wreck sits close to the shore in just 20m of water, offering the chance for divers of all levels to truly appreciate the magic of wreck diving.



## Scapa Flow 1 & 2

In 2022, the club ran two expeditions to Scapa Flow to dive the famous wrecks; the first in January and the second in November. Two groups travelled to the Orkney islands taking the ferry direct from Aberdeen. The group spent the week living aboard the MV Karin, successfully completing dives on the Karlsruhe, F2. YC21, Brummer, Coln, V83 and Markgraf. A total of twelve divers managed over 100 dives between them over the two expeditions.



Scapa Flow



## Millshore Solstice Weekend

Eight club members embarked on a wild camping and diving weekend at Millshore on the Moray coast, taking one boat and exploring the dramatic cliffs and pinnacles along the coast, as well as diving with the seal colonies.

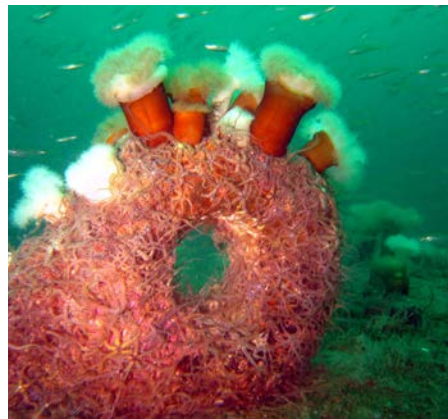


Millshore



## St Kilda and the Outliers

The club chartered the MV Clasina for a two-week adventure to explore the remote islands and rocks that lie 50 miles to the North-West of Scotland. A 12-person group went into the eye of a gale that lasted for 10 days of the expedition having to take shelter in the Orkneys before braving the tail end of the storm for a very “spicy” crossing to St Kilda and back. Despite the weather and changing plans, the group completed some amazing dives building confidence and experience in new kit, exploratory diving and seamanship. The expedition was featured in an extended two issue article in SCUBA Magazine (April & May 2023 issues).





## Capernwray

A group of four club members travelled to Capernwray inland dive site on the edge of the Lake District to enjoy the underwater spectacles and expand their skills. Videos from this trip can be watched by clicking the links below:

[\*Exploring a 'Wee Boatie'\*](#)

[\*Final Day of the Capernwray Trip\*](#)

## Dunbar

Six divers from the club took the inflatable for a long weekend to dive out of Dunbar Harbour, near Edinburgh. The group faced some challenging planning due to the tides that can be experienced in the area, but managed some great dives on the wrecks and offshore pinnacles that the area is famous for.



*An impromptu gig on the Dunbar trip*

## Firth of Forth

Six club members took the inflatable and a mini compressor for a weekend's diving on the Firth of Forth; initially planning to dive out of Burnt Island harbour. Despite a successful launch on the first day, the weather conditions became uncondusive to diving, resulting in the club having to retire to shore and instead opting for two dives in the nearby Prestonhill quarry. The next day was more successful, launching out of Anstruther harbour with two dives each on the pretty Vows Reef site.



## Loch Duich

This was an end of season weekend trip organised in conjunction with Ellon BSAC and Grampian SSAC clubs with 35 divers attending and staying in the comfortable Ratagan hostel. The group dived in the sheltered waters of Loch Duich with its abundant and varied marine life. The club qualified two Advanced Ocean Divers during the trip.



# Special Projects

During the year, club members have taken part in a number of special projects.

## Shipwreck discovery and local history

Local wreck history and research is of particular interest to a group of our club members. In 2022, this group discovered, dived and identified five previously unknown shipwrecks.

Using trimix and closed circuit rebreathers, exploring in depths of between 50-100m, the group have discovered over 50 shipwrecks in the vicinity of Aberdeen. These shipwrecks are now documented on their website [www.buchandivers.com](http://www.buchandivers.com).

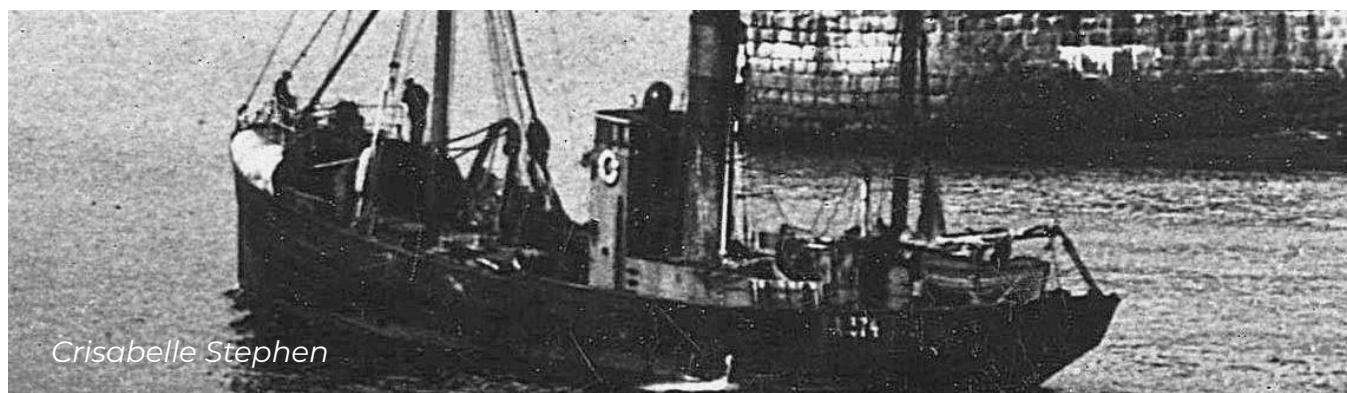
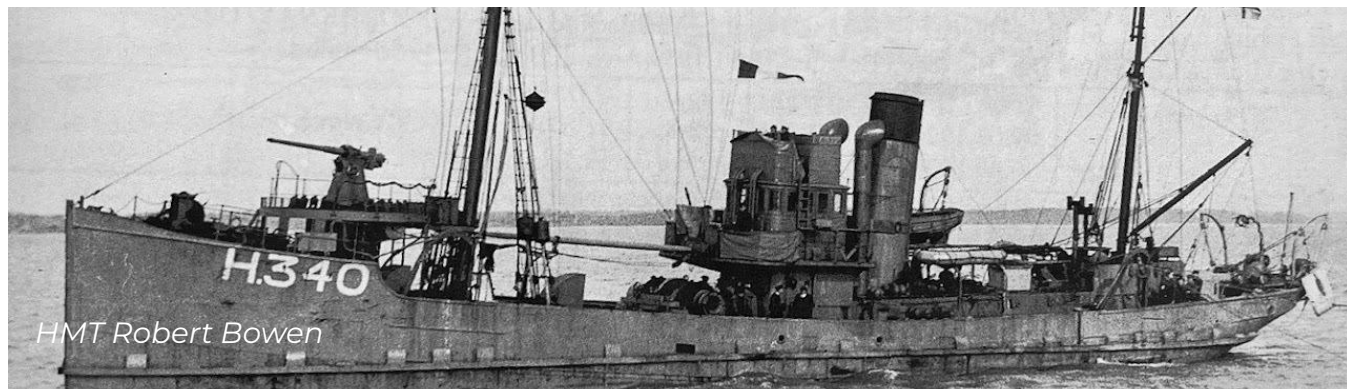
In 2022, working from marks obtained from local fishermen and public domain seabed survey results, the group explored multiple seabed anomalies. Some turned out to be large rocks, but five proved to be remains of ships. The group dived the wrecks, collecting information about them. Pictures, videos and measurements were taken, together with an analysis of cargo and artefacts. From this information, the marine architecture, propulsion, age, vessel purpose, cause of loss and any unique structures were ascertained. Research which included shipwreck archives, Lloyds Register, Vessel Losses, Board of Trade Enquiries and newspaper archives allowed us to positively identify the names and histories of all five wrecks, and in one case, contact the relatives of a lost sailor.

The five ships were: the SS Dungonnell; lost with all hands in 1903 on a voyage from Sunderland to Belfast. Evidence suggested that she ran aground, was blown offshore and later foundered. The SS Kathleen; again lost with all hands in 1914 when she foundered in a gale, this was likely aided by poor stability. Neither of these vessels were recorded as being lost off Aberdeen, they simply never appeared at their destination port.

The minesweepers HMT Robert Bowen and HMT Fort Royal; lost only 600m apart in the same enemy aircraft attack off the shores of Aberdeen while on Royal Navy operations in 1940. And finally, the Aberdeen trawler Crisabelle Stephen; lost in 1939 with all hands, whilst under tow, after grounding near Newburgh.



Fort Royal Telegraph



## Scientific Studies

At the end of our Oban trip, three of our members joined BSAC expedition officer Andy Hunt on MV Clasina (skipper Bob Anderson) as part of the citizen science project 'Operation Oyster'. The project aimed to find a native oyster bed in UK waters, after the population was decimated during the Victorian period. Compared to (invasive) Pacific oysters, native oysters trap significantly more carbon. Like other shellfish, they also filter the water. Oysters gather in bed clumps, living one on top of the other.

We found the first oyster shell of the expedition on the SS Thesis, a promising indication that there may be others in the area.. A week later, club members again joined the team on David Ainsley's boat, 'Porpoise'. Here, we were part of the group who found a living oyster (as well as lots more shells) near the Isle of Seal.

Club members also took part in the Microplastics Research Program in 2022. This program is establishing a map of the presence of microplastic residue around the UK coast. The team collected sediment samples at a number of local dive sites and returned these together with date and location details to be counted and the concentrations mapped.

Finally, during 2022, the club initiated a project to create a dive map of Cove Harbour, a popular sheltered seawater site mainly used for training. This project is ongoing but will eventually form a very useful reference guide for future club members.



# Our Club

## Club Organisation

Our club's financial year runs from 1st October to 30th September. During the year, we hold at least four Committee Meetings plus an Annual General Meeting, all of which are conducted according to the club's constitution. All meetings are open to all club members and minutes are published to the full membership group.

## Club Structure

We operate a flat structure, preferring minimal hierarchy. Key management activities are performed by the **Training Officer, Diving Officer, Treasurer, Secretary** and **Chair** under the guidance of the committee. Dive planning and management, and expedition organisation are performed by suitably qualified club members. All are encouraged to take part in instruction, either through direct teaching, buddying with novices or just helping out at the pool night. This allows everyone to feel involved and provides opportunities to anyone who wishes to participate. All of our experienced divers are very approachable and helpful.

## New Officer Roles

The committee originally comprised nine officers. However, in 2022, in order to take cognisance of the growing membership, to reflect our clubs' new direction and considering the club members' special interests, we increased both the size and diversity of the committee by creating five new Officer roles.

**The new roles were:**

**Welfare and Diving For All Officer**

**New Membership Representative**

**Social Media Officer**

**Junior Membership Representative**

**Environment Representative**

As a consequence of these changes, 50% of the committee members are now women and 30% of the committee have joined the club since 2021.

This new structure has proven very effective at encouraging communication and collaboration between the deeply experienced members, and the newer, often younger, and more diverse members, who ultimately represent the future of the club. It keeps the committee fresh and helps to empower all members to have a voice, leading to a greater sense of involvement and ownership of the club. Having had this experience, we are open-minded to creating more roles if we feel this would be beneficial.

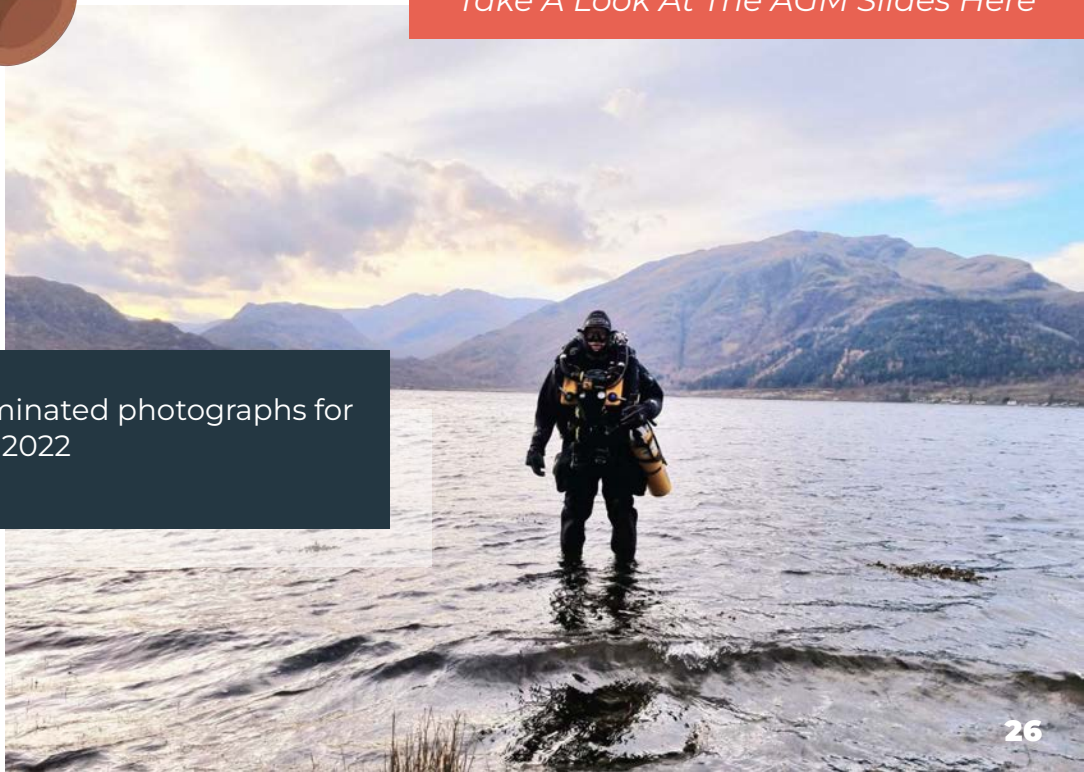
## The AGM

We hold our AGM in-person, annually in November. The AGM is open to the public to attend. Other than official club business such as refreshing our constitution, we use the event to reflect on the year, checking specifically the club's progress against our strategy, our dives and dive trips. We also use the event to make awards to our divers, such as 'Best Photo' and 'Most Prolific Diver'. The Wooden Spoon award is always a fun one to give and receive. Last year it was awarded to the boat handler who dropped off his divers on a lobster pot rather than the wreck of the Breda, a mile away! These AGMs are well attended with home bakes, teas and coffees provided by club members.



[Take A Look At The AGM Slides Here](#)

One of the nominated photographs for 'Best Photo' of 2022



## Keeping the Costs of Diving Low

In 2022, the committee revised our membership fee structure to make diving more affordable for members. To give some background, prior to 2022, our membership fee was £84 per annum, for all members, regardless of their personal circumstances; the fee had remained at this level since 2017. Given the wider cost of living stresses, we chose to avoid increasing the fees. However, we wanted to take this a step further and so implemented a membership tier structure mirroring BSAC's so that we could offer different rates of membership, to keep the cost of diving affordable for everyone. We also offer annual and monthly payment options, the latter being collected through the BSAC Levy scheme to reduce administration effort and to spread payments.

The new membership tiers have been very much appreciated by club members and 30% have reduced their payments as a result. **Our tiers are:**

Membership Tier	Annual Fee	Per Month
Full member	84.00	7.00
Family (full, joint & U18s)	153.60	12.80
Joint (same household as full paying)	58.44	4.87
Student (in full-time education)	44.40	3.70
Junior (10-17)	44.40	3.70
Snorkelling member	28.20	2.35
Non-diving member/Social	24.00	2.00

In addition to our focus on membership fees, we are mindful of the club's financial outgoings. We are financially responsible and are careful to maintain low overheads wherever it is possible; other than Zoom costs, all our IT is free, club members maintain compressors and boats and we have no clubhouse to fund.

We use Try Dive revenue to subsidise pool and equipment fees (Try Dives generated £2,200 in 2022) so training can be offered at low cost. We also successfully applied for Club Sport Aberdeen membership which has allowed us to benefit from a 20% reduction in pool fees. This has compensated for inflationary increases in pool charges meaning we have been able to keep our pool fees at the same level for 5 years. We have also kept our equipment rental costs fixed at £20 per day for a full set of diving equipment including air fills and have special arrangements to encourage the use of redundant air systems.

Air fills and top ups for pony cylinders are free and twinsets are filled for the cost of a single tank. As mentioned in the training section, to reduce training load on instructors, we have grouped pool training into long sessions where we can deliver multiple lessons in one day. This has the added benefit that it reduces equipment rental costs for trainees.

As a result, we can offer Ocean Diver qualification for under £400 including full equipment rental, training manual costs, BSAC membership fees and club subscriptions.

Furthermore, we have negotiated discounts for club members at dive stores in Scotland. For example, Puffin Divers in Oban provide club members with a 10% discount on drysuits, BCDs and regulators. And finally, we raised over £1,700 to subsidise DFA diver training, equipment and diving costs for qualifying members.



## Under 18 Divers and DFA

We have a defined **Junior Section** for U18 divers and have arranged specific training, instruction and dive days for these members.

We have created our **Diving For All** group and have trained four of our instructors as DFA Buddies. Diving for All is fully integrated within the club and we have specific funds reserved for this group to allow us to offer free Try Dives, advertising and to fund specialist equipment.

Both of these sections of the club have representation on the committee.

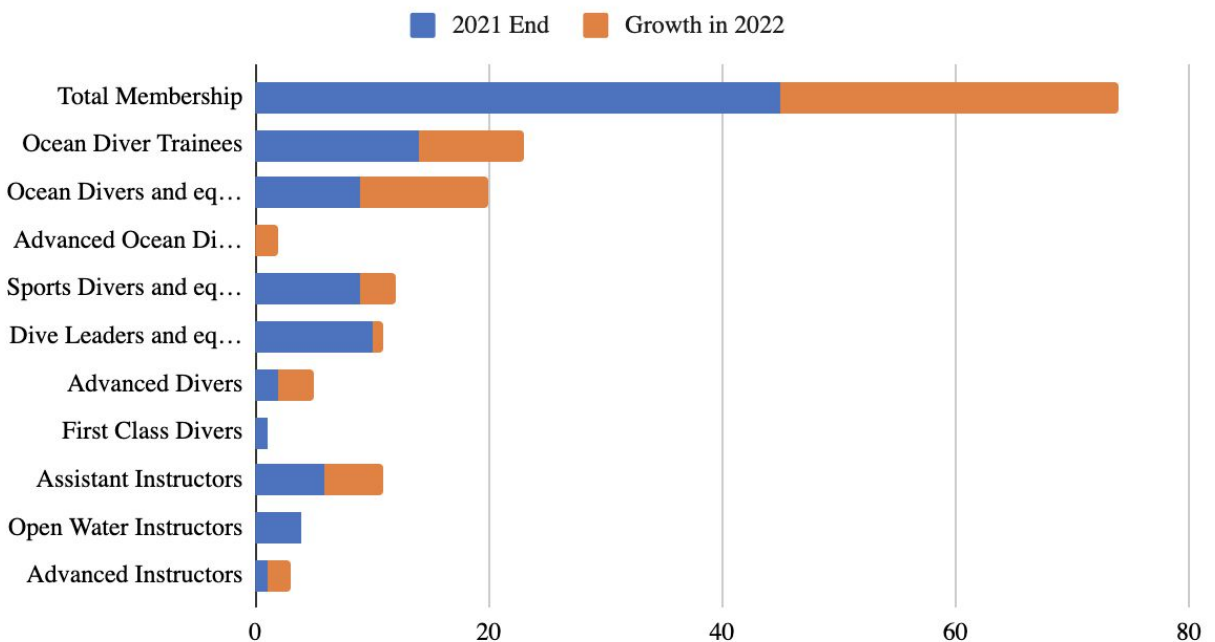
## Other Memberships

We offer two further forms of membership to the club. Firstly, we have a **Snorkelling** class of membership with significantly reduced membership fees. Secondly, we have a **Social Membership** class which provides access to all of our communication tools and invitations to social events. We find that this latter class of membership is useful to engage club members who cannot dive (e.g. parents of U18s) or those who can no longer dive (e.g. club members who may have developed medically disqualifying conditions). We currently have 4 social members in the club.

# Membership

Year on year since 2020, we have grown the club significantly. From a base of around 18 members just 3 years ago, we grew to 45 in 2021 and by the end of 2022 we had 74 club members. Now, at the time of writing this report, the club is 90 strong with another 30 new trainees waiting to join the club in October. We have also grown our junior membership, from 2 under 18 divers in 2021, to 14 in 2022, 5 of whom are aged 13 or under. Additionally, we increased the proportion of women in the club from 20% at the start of 2021 to 41% by the end of 2022 (this compares favourably to the cross-BSAC female membership of 27%) and we have 2 DFA members. And whilst 11 members retired or left the area, 40 new members joined, resulting in the club growing overall by 65%.

## Club Growth in 2022



## Success Factors

A key component of our strategy was to cultivate and retain a diverse club membership. So far, this has been successful, particularly in 2022; we have been identified by BSAC as one of the fastest growing clubs in the organisation.

We believe that the innovations, behaviours and actions embedded in our strategy that have helped us the most, can be summarised into two points:

1. **Make it easy to join**

2. **Make it easy to stay**

## 1. Make it easy to join

Our website is clear and updated regularly. It sets out exactly what the club does and has lots of local photos contributed by club members. We list all of our planned and completed club trips on the website so experienced divers can see that we are active.

Once a contact is received, we respond within hours. We have numerous response templates making this a quick and easy process. Responses can be easily tailored to the individual. We make use of a free CRM system (Streak) which is integrated with Gmail and allows all conversations to be tracked efficiently. We follow up on all open conversations regularly to keep discussion open and to harness the enthusiasm of the individual interested in joining.

New members can join BSAC and the club online from our website and this also enrolls them into the BSAC Levy scheme which makes it simple for the new member and saves administration effort and delays.

We run Try Dives monthly, throughout the year. In 2022, 88 people participated in Try Dives and forecasts show that we will do even more in 2023. Anecdotally, people love the Try Dive sessions and get hooked, many join us after a Try Dive. We give out flyers explaining the training process and costs to prospective members so they know what to expect.

We welcome other agency divers at all levels. We respect their qualification and training; constructively explaining the differences with the BSAC approach. 30% of our members were originally PADI trained and are now doing BSAC training.

Finally, as indicated, we work hard to keep the cost of diving as low as we can.

**Each of these factors, we feel, make it easy for people to find us, contact us, get involved, feel welcome and ultimately, join us.**

## 2. Make it easy to stay

We don't do politics or cliques, we deliberately set out to have a relaxed atmosphere where everyone can play an active role without barriers to participation. All dives are open to all members (with sufficient qualification and experience); everyone is invited. No club members have an exalted position, we operate a flat management structure, we try to make it fun for everyone and easy for everyone to talk to each other and take part. We have monthly get-togethers and lots of BBQs at dive sites at all times of the year.

We have a great communications system (Slack) which allows all club members to post information, ask questions, sign-up to events, dives or trips, access training materials and share photos from recent dives. This is heavily used by the club and much better than WhatsApp; we had over 10,000 posts last year alone.

We developed a club strategy and we follow it. It defines what we are about and what we want to be known for, which, put simply, is; to be a SCUBA diving club for everyone who wants to explore, enjoy and respect the underwater world. This drives our activities and behaviours as a club.

We are proud of our diversity, we have 41% female membership and have 14 U18s. We also have two DFA divers. We will not stop at this and ultimately we want to be a club that reflects the local demographics exactly.

We are a training club. We train at all levels, thus remaining relevant to all members. We have an active programme of lectures (via Zoom). Each level has a named coach who is responsible for ensuring that the students are encouraged and given every opportunity they can to develop. We plan all our dives and dive trips so that members can get the opportunity to do relevant experience dives and open water lessons so they can progress with their certification.

We do lots of diving, all year round. We had 9 dive trips in 2022 and totalled nearly 1000 dives by members. We plan to beat that every year.

We care for the environment (we have a dedicated committee position to drive our efforts) and have a social responsibility to raise funds for good causes and help the wider society. This gives our members more things to get involved in, than simply diving.

**All of these factors, we believe, make it easier for our members to feel welcome, involved and active; develop meaningful friendships, participate in those activities that are of individual interest to them and develop in the direction that they want for their diving future. We value and respect each individual as unique to the club and are always open to suggestions and new ideas. As a result, people like to remain involved.**



# Communications and Technology

We have made use of multiple, free technology services to make club promotion, communication, activities and training easier and more accessible. Our intent has been to innovate to minimise club expenditure on technology, however, provide great and flexible services for club management, club members and potential club members alike.

We consolidated all of our documents onto **Google Drive** and made them available to club members through shared drives and links. Our documents include training records, equipment records, plans for past and upcoming club trips etc. The intent is to create an accessible set of working documents for interested club officers and members and hold a useful archive for future club members. We also set up a **central email account** for all external club correspondence (absac67@gmail.com), created a shared club calendar with details of all club events (e.g. committee meetings, lectures, social meetings and dive trips) and created a new, more informative website using Google's free web building and hosting tools. We put a club member contact directory on-line and, with a member's permission, made it securely available on personal devices.

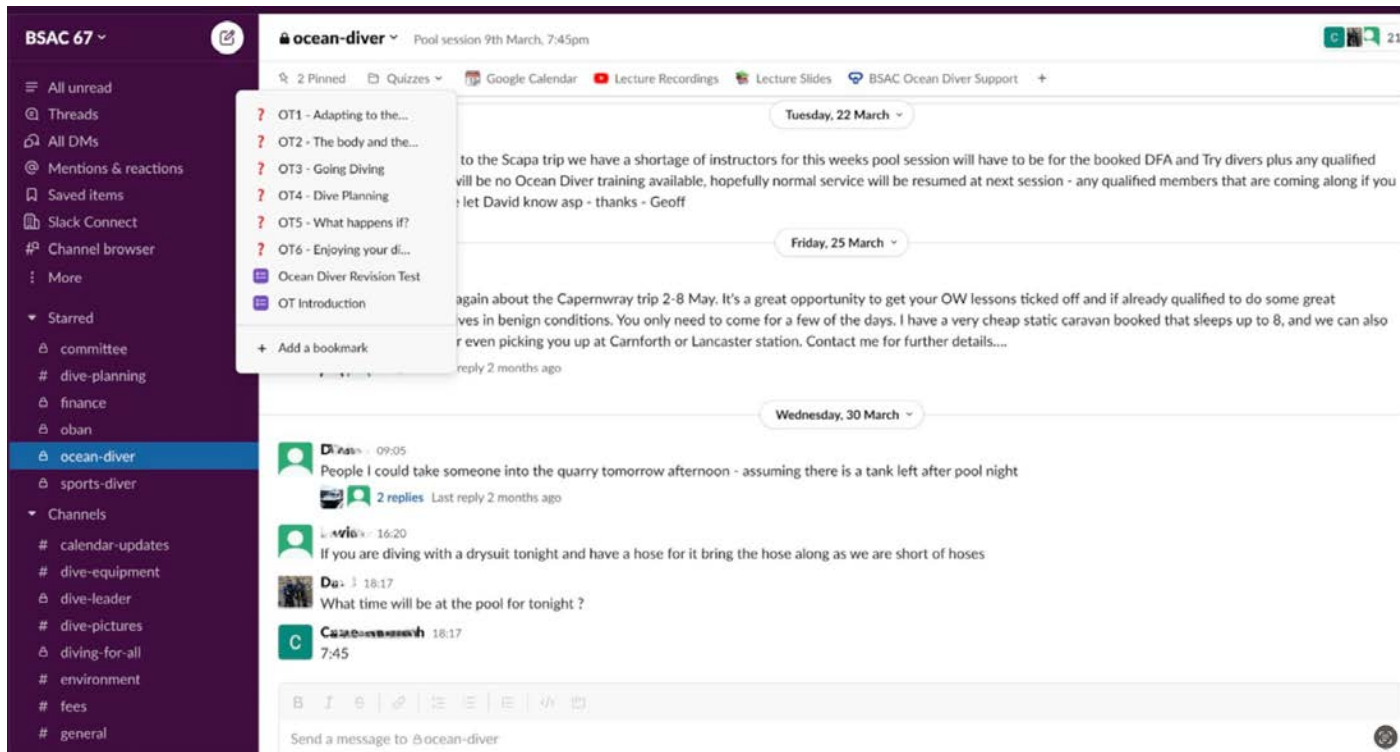
Additionally, we made use of free **Google Forms** to create online quizzes and tests to help with theory revision, This is available to use on mobile devices making it simple and accessible to those with busy lifestyles to complete. Instant feedback is provided to trainees and we are able to centrally track who is completing them and how well they are doing, offering targeted support where needed.

For the purposes of club communication, initially we used WhatsApp and email but as the membership grew and more events and dives were arranged, we found it too easy to lose important messages in all the responses. As previously mentioned, we now make use of a free app, **Slack**, to manage all our communications. This is proving to be a wonderful tool to engage with our membership, share information and advice, support training, share photos, arrange multiple concurrent local dives, dive trips and more.

To give an example of how Slack operates, our Ocean Diver trainees have their own private chat channel where we can post details of training logistics, they can ask questions such as requesting reviews from more experienced members of equipment they are thinking of buying, and share information about anything relevant. The tool allows us to help the trainees learn through bookmarking key documents and resources on the channel, e.g. links to the BSAC Ocean Diver Support pages, lecture video recordings, online quizzes and revision tests.



This creates a one-stop focal point for Ocean Divers to easily access all they need for learning and revision. We have set up similar channels for Sports Diver and Dive Leader trainees and channels have been set up for other specialist areas, such as; Dive Planning, Environment, Equipment Questions, Trip Plans etc. We have received wonderful feedback from the club membership about how useful the tool is.



Furthermore, we have customised the Slack application to maximise its use for our purposes; by using a simple Slack command it now shows tide times for our local dive sites up to a year in advance. This is very useful for dive planning. We have added similar customisation for sunrise/sunset times, moon state (for springs/heaps) and weather forecasting. Slack is integrated with Zoom, Google Calendar and Google Drive so it's simple to organise calls, diary events and share documents. We recommend this app to all BSAC clubs and would be happy to help with the set-up.

During lockdown, we made significant use of **Zoom** for training theory lectures. We have continued to use it as it allows many of our members who are offshore workers to join calls from their installations. We run lectures via Zoom for Ocean Diver, Sports Diver, Dive Leader and Advanced Diver, with all instructors and assistant instructors taking turns to deliver them. These are scheduled using the shared club Google calendar, recorded and made available on our private YouTube channel for revision.

We revamped our **Facebook** and **Instagram** accounts and have created a committee position specifically to handle our promotion on Social Media.

Pictures from dives are picked up from Slack and posted on the Facebook/Instagram accounts to show how active we are. We also post photographs and videos taken on dives and trips using our **Youtube** channel.

Additionally, we rebuilt our website using free tools and hosting with Google. We target new members and provide information on our activities, training, dive trips and fees. We wanted our website to reflect the flexible, active and socially inclusive club that we are, with a strong focus on training and the ability to take on experienced divers from other agencies.

We worked hard to improve our website's positioning in Google search and My Business listings and actively sought reviews from members and Try Divers. The majority of new contacts and members came to us via the contact form on our website but we also support enquiries from the BSAC Find It tool, Facebook Messenger and Google Chat. We have created a comprehensive set of online FAQs for Google Chat which our friendly Bot uses to help answer questions.

We made use of a free **Customer Relationship Management app (Streak)** to receive, manage and organise external enquiries. This is integrated with our club email, website contact form and the BSAC Find It tool to receive, track and manage correspondence with potential recruits in a single platform. Streak allows us to move contacts through a process flow seamlessly, from the initial prospect, through different stages and experiences with the club, ultimately to club membership. It allows us to delegate enquiries to club members to reply and respond within 24 hours with full and helpful information, supported by email templates.

The tool Streak has been invaluable in helping us organise contacts, swiftly understand the history of all correspondence with the individual, review the status and outstanding actions, and to respond with personal, tailored, and helpful emails which show that we are genuinely interested in having people join us.

Contacts 107 Count

5 Lead → 6 Try Dive → 9 Training? → 3 Joining club → 22 Nurturing → 27 Closed - Joined → 35 Closed

Name	Dive Grade	Date of Last	Notes	Lead Source	Form date
<b>Lead</b> +					
[Name]	n/a	May 24	Learning to dive. I'd like to book a try dive or visit. I don't know yet! I'm going to Tenerife on h	BSAC	Tue, 24 May 2022 18:22
[Name]	PADI Rescue	May 29	Diving as a non-member for few dives! My name is Antonin and I'm a CMAS 3 stars diver,	Website	23/05/2022 22:57:12
[Name]	n/a	May 20	Diver Training My daughter (DOB 29.08.07) has previously done a pool based dive session	Website	20/05/2022 14:56:32
[Name]	n/a	May 16	Try Dive, Diver Training Hi, been meaning to get into this for years. Feel time is now and loo	Website	15/05/2022 21:59:12
[Name]	n/a	May 17	Media enquiry - video footage Hello, I'm an archive producer working with Frank Films in Bri	Website	13/05/2022 15:01:49
<b>Try Dive</b> +					
[Name]	n/a	May 28	Try Dive	Website	08/05/2022 13:28:14
[Name]	PADI OW	Apr 27	Try Dive Hi there... (many years ago) I was PADI qualified (when I worked at Comex Diving !	Website	27/04/2022 17:10:18
[Name]	n/a	May 30	Try Dive	Website	12/04/2022 16:54:18
[Name]			Two try Dives requested by Paul		
[Name]	n/a	May 27	Try Dive for 4 - Hi yes we are interested there is 4 of us myself, my husband, son and his pe	Facebook	
[Name]	n/a		Try Dive - contact when we have dates.	Website	24/03/2022 08:17:54
<b>Training?</b> +					

In addition to all of this, we built a spreadsheet tool to hold local, club specific, information on membership status e.g. subscription payment status and support analysis of club member statistics. This is integrated with exports from the BSAC Club Membership System and ensures that our information is synchronised with BSAC records of our members.

## Promotion

Over 75% of our enquiries and new membership have come to us through our website contacts form. However, we have been successful in using other methods to actively attract new members.

One method involved a positive recruitment drive for DFA Try Divers and members. The committee agreed that this would be a good cause and that we should make the DFA Try Dives free. We contacted the NHS, Aberdeenshire council and three local disabled charities to discuss the service we could offer. This was passed on by word of mouth and we were delighted to attract 5 disabled Try Divers, some of them for multiple Try Dives and we now have 2 DFA members of the club and one paraplegic member joining us in 2023. We are re-launching our DFA program in 2023 with a series of DFA posters created specifically for us by BSAC.

We are also active in getting our website linked from other organisations in the area. Our ClubSport Aberdeen membership brings exclusive links from their sporting website to our own. We are also linked from other Scottish diving business websites. In 2022 we started building relationships with local Scouting organisations and have arranged dedicated weekend fundraising Try Dives, for Scouts and Cubs.

**These events have been great fun for all to take part in, as well as beneficial for raising club funds. We have more arranged in 2023.**

**Learn to dive**

Start your own scuba adventure today and learn to dive with BSAC.

Contact your local BSAC club today:

**Aberdeen BSAC**

www.aberdeenbsac.uk  
absac67@gmail.com | 07785501299

Facebook.com/BSAC.67

ABERDEEN SUB-AQUA CLUB 67

**BSAC**  
Dive with us

UK National Governing Body for scuba diving and snorkelling

**35**

We also work with two local PADI training organisations and have agreed membership fee discounts for divers who we refer to them for training and subsequently join our club. We have a number of members who have come through this route.

## Aberdeen embraces Diving for All

**ABERDEEN SUB-AQUA CLUB (BSAC 67) IS** a growing and thriving club, diving the cold seas around the North-East coast of Scotland. Having doubled its membership in the last two years, the club was searching for something different that would give its excited young team some new challenges and allow the club to put something back

into the wider community.

In November last year, we decided to start a Diving for All (DFA) programme to give people with different abilities the opportunity to try scuba. With no prior experience of this area of diving, we did some groundwork to identify how we could start slowly and safely, and decided to start with members of

the amputee community. They wrote to local disability support groups and quickly found some keen amputees to give scuba a go!

In February, we ran our first DFA Try Dives, which were hugely successful; the new divers loved being underwater and are now converts, desperate to return! Having gained confidence and a better understanding of the factors involved with DFA, the club will soon be extending the opportunity to try scuba diving to people with all other kinds of disabilities, the club are now arranging try dives for the visually impaired and paraplegics.

We have also just completed a highly successful fundraiser, which raised nearly £1,100 for specialist equipment and to cover pool costs so that the DFA Try Dives can be offered for free.

We have received great feedback from the volunteers: "Myself and fellow right above knee amputee Lee were very kindly invited by Aberdeen Sub-Aqua club to a taster night at a pool in Aberdeen. When we arrived, everyone was so welcoming

and really professional. Any anxiety I may have had quickly disappeared and both myself and Lee felt we were well looked after and learnt so much from Geoff our instructor and Paul who was our support diver. We will definitely be back and highly recommend to anyone else with a disability."

Paul Crookbain, the club's DFA coordinator said: "Our members are really enjoying helping out and being part of the initiative. It's been great to see people take part in our sport who might not normally do so. The DFA programme was a new initiative for all the members of BSAC 67. We have achieved great results from the hard work and input of all involved. The funds raised by our club will help us continue to advance the DFA programme to even greater achievements involving many more people with disabilities. Our club looks forward to working with other clubs and organisations in the future, by working together within our community we can all help create a more inclusive BSAC club."

We hope other clubs follow with the DFA programme.

REBEKAH GIRLING, Aberdeen SAC



Left to right: Geoff Clarke, Paul Crookbain, Therese (Tee) and Lee

26 SCUBA

## Our DFA and sport promotion partners



# Activities

## Publicity

We have increased our coverage in SCUBA magazine, with two articles published in 2022 and more in 2023, including a two issue write up of our successful 2022 visit to St Kilda. This has created good publicity for the club and has reinforced to our members that we are a great club doing some great things!



PART 1

## North Sea Odyssey

In the first of a two-part feature, Steve Dover tells the story of an epic two-week voyage taking in the North Sea's most spectacular dive sites

Of the thousands of divers who dive UK waters, few get the opportunity to be part of such an awesome adventure as we did last summer. Planned for two weeks aboard Bob Anderson's liveaboard – the converted trawler MV Claspina – 11 of us covered 1,118 nautical miles and dived some of the

widest and remote waters of Scotland's far north and west coastline. On trips such as these, while diving is the main focus, it's not just about the diving. It's about the people, the boat, the weather, the overwhelming raw beauty of the scenery and the overall adventure. We experienced all of that as well as the world-class diving.

### The Dive Team

*Pictured left to right:*

- Emily Gamble, Grampian SAC
- Craig Lamont, Eilon SAC
- Ian Hicks, BSAC Direct
- John Robb, BSAC Direct
- Jim Burke, Aberdeen SAC, Organizer
- Dave Murdoch, Eilon SAC
- Sonny Walker, Aberdeen SAC, Photographer
- Rachael Green, Aberdeen SAC
- Ollie Burke, Aberdeen SAC
- Catherine (Cat) Smith, Aberdeen SAC
- Steve Dover, Lumington & Warwick BSAC, Author and photographer

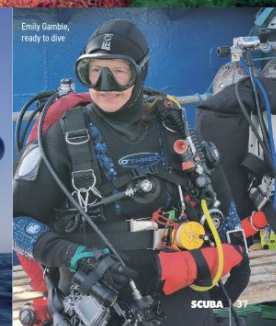
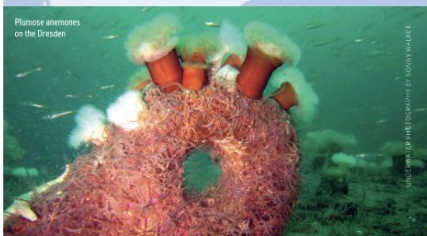
Our starting point was Stromness on Orkney in mid-August, where we arrived at the quayside in darkness having taken the ferry from Aberdeen earlier in the evening. Kit was sorted for an early start the next morning and the engines duly fired up at 8.30am – alarms were definitely not required on this trip. Always subject to the vagaries of the weather, the original plan was to head straight out to the first Outlier – North Shoal. The weather had other plans – shifting blankets of sea mist carried on northerly winds kept us hemmed around the Orkneys for three days until there was a gradual shift to southerlies. However, the sites we dived did not disappoint.

### Starting with Scapa

The first site was in Scapa Flow on the magnificent wreck of the **SMS Dresden**. Scuttled by the Germans in 1919 and lying on her port side in 28m, the wreck is covered in dead men's fingers and plumose anemones, with a whole array of crustaceans crammed into crevasses. Great shoals of juvenile herring hung above the structure. At midships we passed one of the intact 6-inch guns sitting silently in its caisson, pointlessly aimed at passing divers and wrasse.

A huge rectangular fissure-riven rock that just broke the surface at **Inga Ness** was next. The briefing from skipper Bob was quite clear: "Come up anywhere but around the back of this lump because I cannot take the boat in to pick you up". Passing the help line, we dropped down walls festooned with anemones and sponges, within which a great variety of nudibranchs went about their business of feeding and breeding.

Turning the corner of the massive rock brought us to a place with a wide and deep ravine where three divers could pass



In addition, we have revamped our Social Media presence and have a club member dedicated to posting club activities and dive pictures on Facebook and Instagram.

## Social

Club members meet twice a month, at pool night and in a private space in a city centre pub. Fortunately the pub is child and dog friendly! We use the space to catch up, hatch plans for adventures, deliver face to face theory tests and have even used it for first-aid and resuscitation training.

We held our Christmas lunch in February 2022 (postponed due to Covid lockdown in December 2021), 20 people attended the lunch and afterwards, a late night Northern Soul disco. Great fun was had by all, of particular note were the outstanding dance moves by our chair and club secretary in the run up to the 3am finish.

In mid-March we held a quiz night to raise funds for DFA at The Ashvale, with just over 100 people attending from our own club, their friends and family, and members from other local BSAC clubs; Ellon and Deeside. We also had representatives from an organisation which supports amputees, to share awareness and provide info on how the organisation works and the support they can provide. The event was supported by local diving businesses with donations of raffle prizes.

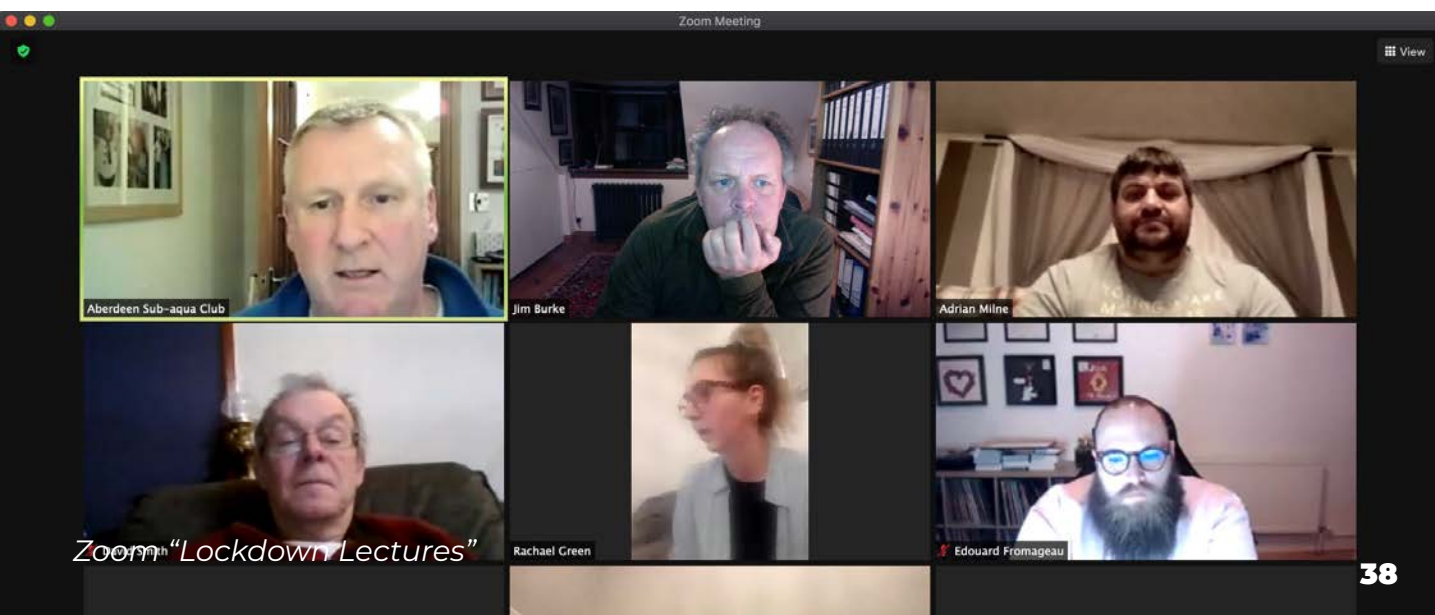
Local Artist and member Kathleen Cowie donated an original piece of artwork and a bottle of malt whisky was donated by another club member as a prize.

In total £1096 was raised during the evening, and the feedback provided was that a great night was had by all.

## Inter-branch liaison

We work very closely with other clubs in the area, BSAC, ScotSac and PADI. We specifically identified joint working as a key tenet in our club strategy. We are all divers and we believe different clubs can work together to the benefit of our members through sharing of information, experiences and resources.

Our joint working began in 2020 when local clubs got together to launch "Lockdown Lectures" - a series of online lectures about diving related topics such as expeditions, projects and equipment. Through this, we got to know and work with other clubs and this relationship blossomed in 2022.



During 2022 we held joint training sessions with the Ellon and Deeside BSAC clubs sharing instructors, training sessions and holding joint Advanced Diver theory lectures. Some Deeside instructors helped us with our pool training and we, in turn, supported the Aberdeen University club in Ocean Diver and Sports Diver lectures, we also provided instructors to run their Ocean Diver pool training. The Ellon BSAC club arranged a joint Dive Leader Rescue/BLS/Rescue Scenarios training weekend which 12 of our members at all levels of certification joined. It was professionally run, great fun and helped build even stronger inter-branch relationships.



Our DFA Fundraiser had members from all the local clubs taking part and contributing to the DFA fund.

We held a joint dive trip to Loch Duich in November 2022. We joined 35 members from Ellon and Deeside BSAC plus Grampian ScotSac and the local PADI training organisation, Aberdeen Diving Services to dive in this wonderful site. We stayed in a communal hostel, dived and ate together - the Saturday night curry was a huge success!



A number of our club members are beginning to move into more technical diving. We have limited experience of this in the club, but our friends in the Deeside BSAC have a wealth of technical diving experience. We have agreed a mentoring program whereby members of our Aberdeen club can, if they want, pair up with members of Deeside to provide advice on equipment and technique and potentially buddying on some deeper dives.

We also work well with two local PADI organisations. We find that some of our new contacts want to complete their diver training on a much faster timescale than we can offer; typically to meet deadlines for holidays. In these cases, rather than turn the contact away, we recommend they take their training locally with BSAC Centres or PADI and, afterwards, join BSAC and our club to continue their training with us. This works well and has delivered us 5 new BSAC members in 2022. One organisation provides us with a small commission on each referral, which we give back to the new member when they join us in the form of free club membership for their first year.

## Environment

We created an Environment Officer role on the committee in 2021. Our club members are environmentally conscious and the committee role was designed to coordinate our activities and ensure that environmental considerations were at the forefront of the club's decisions and activities. For example the look but don't touch policy, good finning practices etc.

We set up a number of initiatives supporting #take3forthesea (a charity supporting removal of plastics from the ocean). We applied for, and received a grant of litter picking equipment from the Marine Conservation Society and this was used effectively on a number of beach cleans.

A number of our club members are current Seasearch marine observers and in 2022 two more members completed the Seasearch observer course.

Enquiries were made as to how the club could support the Ghost Fishing UK initiative and this is ongoing with a number of keen members working to achieve the minimum requirements for participation.

We continue to work with local fishermen to recover lost lobster pots or where the pot is clearly abandoned, we ensure that no animals can be trapped. We encourage club members to view every dive as an underwater litter pick.

As mentioned above, we also participated in Operation Oyster and Ocean Microplastics research.





We hope that throughout this document we have successfully conveyed just how proud we are of our 2022 achievements.



## Final Thoughts

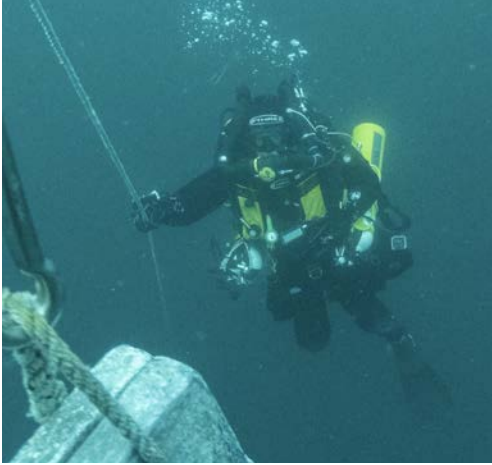
We have been led by our club strategy and come such a long way to deliver most of the objectives a year earlier than we ever thought possible. Principally, we have dealt with the challenges that faced the club in 2019, the subsequent crises of COVID 19 and the cost of living crisis. We have grown the club membership and we are more diverse. We are bringing diving to the next generation, diving more frequently and exploring in more adventurous locations.

Despite the background of rising costs, we have innovated through new technologies and new ideas from our fantastically talented and valued members, resulting in many cases, in reduced costs.

In this final section, we share with you the voices of some of the people who have made this club what it is. We talk about our next steps and acknowledge the people and organisations who have helped us on our journey.

# The club members speak

Below are some of our members favourite memories from 2022 and views on the club.



## **Jim Burke (Joined 2019)**

My favourite memory of 2022 must have been when we identified two shipwrecks in our local area. Neither of them had been recorded as being lost here. They simply left their departure ports and were never seen or heard from again, all of the crew were lost. It was rather humbling to solve the hundred year old mystery of these vessels' locations and probable cause of loss, and to think of their unfortunate crews.



## **Ollie Burke (Joined 2020)**

My favourite moment was reaching the archipelago of St Kilda after being battered through crossing the Minch in 2m swells. The team and crew were knocked around a bit for 24 hours but we had great fun and in the end it was absolutely worth it!



## **Sarah Watson (Joined 2022)**

I am an avid potion brewer and druid. The diversity of the club allows me to feel at home, whether it be casting spells, boiling up some frog's breath or just wizzarding around.



## **Scott Montague (Joined 2022, aged 12)**

My favourite moment, was my second "proper dive" into the quarry, I just remember it being really fun as we went around and pointed out random things such as the chess board, the weird boots stuck to a concrete slab, the sunken burger van and whatnot. I just remember it rather fondly, it was a really fun day.



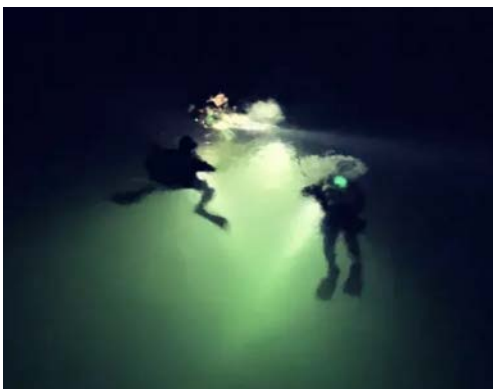
## **Caroline & Dave Montague (Parents of Scott)**

When Scott first mentioned that he would like to try scuba diving we had no idea of what the year would hold emotionally. There have been really high highs as well as some real challenges. Our favourite (and very proud!) parts are numerous but include seeing his success at passing the theory test despite never having sat a formal test before in his life, or having ever before actually studied physics or science. Of watching how Scott is growing in maturity and determination to keep trying to push past psychological blocks when doing open water assessments, making the achievement more meaningful (and emotional for us to watch - particularly Mum)! And finally, Scott has been interested in all things technical and scientific since he could walk and scuba diving has allowed us to see him passionately learning, talking and, his favourite bit - being completely hands on in his diving experience. The club has been so patient and understanding and we are hugely grateful. The picture opposite was taken at Scott's first dive in the sea!



## **Geoff Clark (Joined 2017)**

My favourite memory of 2022 was taking my nine year old daughter to the AGM and seeing her face as members gave their expedition reports with such passion accompanied by some amazing pictures, which has sparked a real interest in her and having completed two pool dives is now desperate to be able to start her Ocean Diver training.



## **Rachael Green (Joined 2019)**

2022 was a year of many highlights, so many that would have to choose the whole year as my 'best bit'

I did my first night dive, I did my longest dive, I dived in many new locations, I gained new qualifications and made new friends through the club.



### **Chris Ritchie (Joined 2021)**

I started my OD training in Jan 2022 and was progressing well. I was the 1st pupil in our class to get into the quarry which was super duper exciting. However, health issues held me back for 6 months. Fortunately the club worked with this and I was able to complete the last of my training and been

qualified since 03/11/22. I am glad that the club kept me close, the members were always asking how I was doing and the instructors have all been very patient during the whole time.



### **Marc McMillian (Joined 2022)**

Having completed the 'PADI: Advanced Open Water' course, I found myself not able to do much scuba diving afterwards unless it was for a qualification that I didn't feel ready for.

Once the Covid phase had passed, I decided to take the plunge to buy my own equipment and join my local BSAC club. The club members were super inviting and there are so many knowledgeable people around that are willing to help.

I'm unintentionally not the most sociable of people at times, however, I feel the BSAC club has improved my social skills through the love of scuba diving. I've had a lot of ups and downs but keep learning new things (especially those rapid accents kinda ups, which are actually downs).

Nevertheless, I really enjoy the learning process that BSAC offers and getting to know different people from all walks of life. Unfortunately, life has been a little unkind recently and I've not really felt like doing much in general. However, I'm super excited to get back to learning with BSAC when I'm ready in the near future!



### **Hannah Johnston (Joined 2022)**

When I first emailed about coming along for a try dive, I felt very welcomed and encouraged to join. This took away any nerves of trying a new sport. The classes were very informative. With them being online, it was very easy to commit to time wise. The pool sessions were a highlight for me.

They are a great way to ease into diving and meet people in the club. Covering everything in the pool first got rid of any uncertainty of diving outdoors. My highlight of the whole OD training was the training in Oban. I saw so many things underwater and am so happy I decided to take up diving.



### **Charlie (Joined 2022, aged 12)**

I've wanted to dive since forever.

The thought of an expansive world where you can fly has always had me hooked. Then I heard that there was a dive club in Aberdeen and I was already signed up. On my try dive I was doing handstands and was smiling so much that my mask seal broke. It feels cool to be in the dive club, it's fun and everyone helps everyone else.



### **Trish (Parent of Charlie)**

Charlie has wanted to dive for years, not being a diver, I was uneasy about holiday diving and I didn't think we'd find a way for him to dive in Aberdeen, then we found the BSAC club. He did a try dive and absolutely loved it. The following pool training sessions were fun, pizza pool night was a favourite. The club explained early on what was required for diving and the costs involved which was appreciated as it gave me the opportunity to budget for the pricey stuff. Charlie's keenness was

such that he was physically jumping up and down with excitement at the mere mention of a future of wreck and cave dives so there really wasn't any doubt that he'd continue. The club did zoom meets about drysuits so I could make informed choices and having everyone on Slack allowed me to get any questions answered about potential purchases, though we also borrow kit from the club so don't need to buy everything straight away. Charlie is loving being around people with a passion for diving and the patience and time given by the instructors in the club is quite incredible. He is learning to dive but also learning about effort and reward and patience and teamwork and looking after his kit and his environment... he has a brilliant new set of role models.



### **Lee Chapman (Joined 2022)**

If it wasn't for the DFA initiative offered by Aberdeen BSAC, I would never have started my SCUBA diving journey, which only started a year and a half ago, as an above the knee amputee. After the first DFA try dive I was hooked, and since then, has led me to completing over 100 dives.

The club not only initially helped me find something I loved after that first try dive, but

the information, skills and techniques learned during my time as a member have been invaluable and can't thank the whole club enough for their efforts in reaching out to me initially, and the nourishing and production of great divers.



### **Cameron Carvey (Joined 2023 )**

In November 2022 I passed my PADI open water diver certification with a local dive shop, after I passed the only advice I was given was to find myself a club. So I approached my local dive club to see if my dad, brother (aged 12) and myself could join, I was then told that due to my brother's age despite being a qualified junior PADI open water diver we could not join. After receiving this news I was a bit disheartened as we all wanted to join and dive together, I decided to put a post up on a local scuba diving Facebook page asking if there are any clubs that would accept a qualified junior diver, that is when I received a message from ABSAC. They

were very helpful answering all my questions and guiding me on what to do to get the most out of our new qualifications.

After lengthy conversations all my concerns were put to rest and we were all invited to the next club get-together to meet some of the members and see if we would like to join. It was that night that we knew that ABSAC was the club for us, they made us feel welcome and everyone was so helpful and just really fun to be around.

Finally the time came to join the other members at an organised weekend diving/camping. It was amazing everyone I dived with really made me feel part of the club and didn't seem bothered that I was a totally new diver with only my training dives under my belt. As a whole it was a daunting prospect joining a club and a whole new community especially as a new qualified family that knew nothing of how the whole community worked but now we feel like we are part of a bigger family of divers that just like to have fun and enjoy diving together.



### **Keilidh Ewan (Joined 2022)**

In September '22 I joined the club for my first ever try dive. As an open water swimmer, I wanted to give it a go and see what diving might be like. As soon as I was buddied up I felt instantly at ease. I came away so excited that I immediately signed up for the next round of Ocean Diver training. One year on and I can say i'm now a proper diver! I've loved every moment, seen amazing wildlife and made some great friendships. Thank you to the Club for welcoming me into this community!



### **Paul Ritchie (Joined 2021 )**

Back in 2021, me and my brother took part in a try dive that was organised by the club. We had both previously expressed an interest in diving and decided to give it a try. We had such a good experience with the club that night we immediately signed up for the Ocean Diver course.

I got a message about when the theory and classes would start for the training and got set up with some basic gear. We started the training and all was going well with the pool and also theory lessons. Unfortunately half way through my training, my dad passed away. This suddenly put my training on hold as I clearly had things in need to deal with. I did miss quite a bit of training with that happening and fell behind the rest of the class. However the club was very accommodating and when I was ready to go back, they organised sessions for me to get back on track and eventually I qualified later than planned

The way I was dealt with, really made me feel part of the club and glad I did it.

I have since joined the club on several diving trips around the country and had great experiences with them. The club is truly inclusive and really makes everyone feel welcome. We are lucky that there are plenty of dive sites close to us so organising regular club dives is easy and the club do a good job doing that. I am in the middle of doing my Sports Diver training now and really looking forward to seeing how far I can go with the assistance of the club and BSAC as a whole.



### **Donna Sunley (Joined 2022)**

After transferring from PADI in 2022 over to the Aberdeen Sub-Aqua club, it was a year of highlights, I started out as Sports Diver and have now worked my way up to Dive Leader and Assistant Diving Instructor, something I never thought I could achieve in 1 year but with the help from club members and instructors I achieved this goal and am truly grateful for the help! I have had so many great dives, in great locations with amazing divers that are now close friends! I even got to Scapa Flow and had the most fantastic time!!!



## **Bex and Dan (Joined 2021 )**

SCUBA diving is always something I wanted to do since I was young but never knew how to get into it. I didn't even know you could dive in Scotland (and enjoy it)! I saw a Facebook post on SCUBA diving in my area from Aberdeen Sub-Aqua Club and jumped at the chance to message the club. I got such an inviting reply and got it booked! I did my try-dive and took my partner along too as I was nervous to go along to a club I didn't know at first. But as soon as we got to the pool we were welcomed by the lovely Chair, Jim and some other members of the club and instructors, all so supportive and encouraging. I felt at ease straight away!

Since the try dive session at the pool we were both hooked and booked onto the ocean diver training that week! I have never met a more enthusiastic welcoming group of people willing to help us! After we passed our written assessment, we booked onto the Oban 2022 trip to get the rest of our practical assessments signed off.

Our first trip away with the club was very exciting and we had so much support from not only the instructors, but everyone in the whole club! Always listening to us if we felt nervous and also encouraging us to get our OD qualification. I am very grateful for the club and the people in it as I have now achieved a life long dream and feel very confident in my abilities due to the training I received. The Oban trip really showed me how much of a family the club is. Since getting our OD qualification we have since now done our Advanced OD qualification and now working towards our Sports Diver and I always feel in safe hands with the instructors. Since also doing my qualification with BSAC I am confident using the knowledge I learned when I dive in new places without the club, like diving abroad.

Since being with the club, we have dived in Majorca, Portugal and away to Malta soon and feel competent enough due to our excellent training from our club! Not only is the club great at organising dive training and trips, they are also excellent at keeping the club social with non diving meet ups. I really feel I could ask anything to the club and I would never feel silly, there is always someone there to give an answer and help improve your knowledge about diving.







### **Tilly (Joined 2020 - aged 13)**

Oban 22 with the club was amazing. I had an opportunity to do amazing dives such as the SS Breda which was amazing. We saw lots of jars, shoes and even wheels. Jim was very patient with me and my sore ears and helped me to get down. I'd had trouble previously trying to equalise, which he helped me with. He showed me different ways to clear my ears and we found a way that worked for me and I felt like I'd finally cracked it. We had lots of fun including a bbq. I loved Oban and will definitely go next year.



### **Keith (1992 - 2012. Rejoined 2022)**

I joined Aberdeen BSAC in 1992, gaining my advanced diver and instructor qualification shortly afterwards. I was also the clubs training officer for 5 years. I left in 2012 to focus more on my young family. The club has always been inclusive and welcoming, but the differences I have noticed since I rejoining is how active the club is with training; resulting in a much larger club, but with limited experience right now, but we are working on that. We also have quite a lot of junior members now, some I think will be the next BSAC leaders. I think my highlights for 2022 were getting back to diving, starting to instruct again, getting a new engine for my RIB, plus showing the club some of the local dive sites that had been forgotten with time.



### **Iona (Joined 2022)**

I joined ABSAC in 2022 as a complete novice. With a background in sailing, I have spent a lot of my life on the water, but much less in the water. From my first Try Dive in September 2022 everyone I met was so supportive and welcoming, it was no time before I had fallen in love with diving and was signing up to be an Ocean Diver Trainee. Training with the club was brilliant, you can really feel the passion for diving from all of the instructors, they were so patient with the large group of trainees, as we all learnt at different paces. As someone who has a tendency to overthink, from day one I have never felt anything but safe in the club's hands. They made the theory lectures fun which in turn help us to remember the information, and to this day I have never once returned home from diving without a smile on my face and an entertaining story to tell my family and friends.



### **Hannah (Joined 2022 - aged 15)**

My first introduction to Aberdeen Sub-Aqua Club was at a try dive pool session. This was the start of a brilliant experience. I had been nervous but the people at the club made it so easy for me to learn. The members of the club have been very patient as I figured things out. I've really enjoyed the experience and I'm taking the next steps in achieving my sports diver qualification.

### **Vannin (Parent of Hannah)**

I'm not a diver so I have been so grateful for all the generous advice and kit loans that allowed my daughter to work out if diving was something she wanted to continue with. The bug has truly bitten and I couldn't have wished for a more friendly, safe or accepting environment for her to learn in. She's been challenged at a pace that works for her and her confidence has grown as a result. The culture of inclusion and diversity at the club seems to make this true for all the newbies I've met along the way.



## Next steps

We hope that throughout this reflection on our club's recent history, we have demonstrated to you just how passionate, lively and active our growing club has been. We are proud to be bringing SCUBA diving to more and more people from increasingly diverse backgrounds in the area.

However, our journey is far from over. We have many initiatives we want to continue developing. For example, having grown our club at junior levels, we need to continue to grow the Dive Leaders and Advanced Divers who can provide the junior divers with more opportunities to dive locally.

With this in mind, we also want to provide improved platforms for more adventurous local diving. Currently we have only one club owned inflatable. Should we be successful with our entry for the 2022 Heinke Award, the club would put the £1000 prize fund towards a new club RIB. This would be of huge benefit to us to expand our offerings to divers of all levels, be that in dive experience, adventure and instruction, as well as assisting in our work in wreck discovery, exploration and environmental science studies. We would also use the recognition associated with the Heinke Trophy to improve our chances in applications for funding and grants to aid us in what we consider to be valuable work.

Now, in 2023, we are already preparing the ground for the new RIB. Fundraising has begun in earnest, and we are concentrating on running Boat Handling, Chart Work and Position Fixing SDCs locally, and training our experienced boat Handlers to become Diver Cox Assessors. With this in place, we hope to have a large cadre of trained, safe and competent crew to make use of the new club RIB when it arrives.



Finally, we would like to thank you for taking your time to read our submission and very much hope you have enjoyed hearing all the activities we have been involved in throughout 2022, together with the experiences shared by so many members of our group. We really hope that having read so much about our activities and ethos, that you will consider our club for this fantastic award.



# Acknowledgements

We would very much like to thank a number of people and organisations who have helped us on our journey.

First and foremost is **Dave Sydenham**, BSAC National Instructor Chief Examiner, who has graciously given us his time, effort and sage advice in helping us establish a stronger instructor base, kick-starting our Advanced Diver training, mentoring our First Class Diver candidate and running locally based SDCs.

**Anne Buchan**, Ellon BSAC Chair, who has organised Dive Leader Safety and Rescue Skills training for club members and the hugely successful multi-club Loch Duich weekend. Her experience and counsel and her recommendations for great local dive sites has been invaluable in helping us re-establish our club

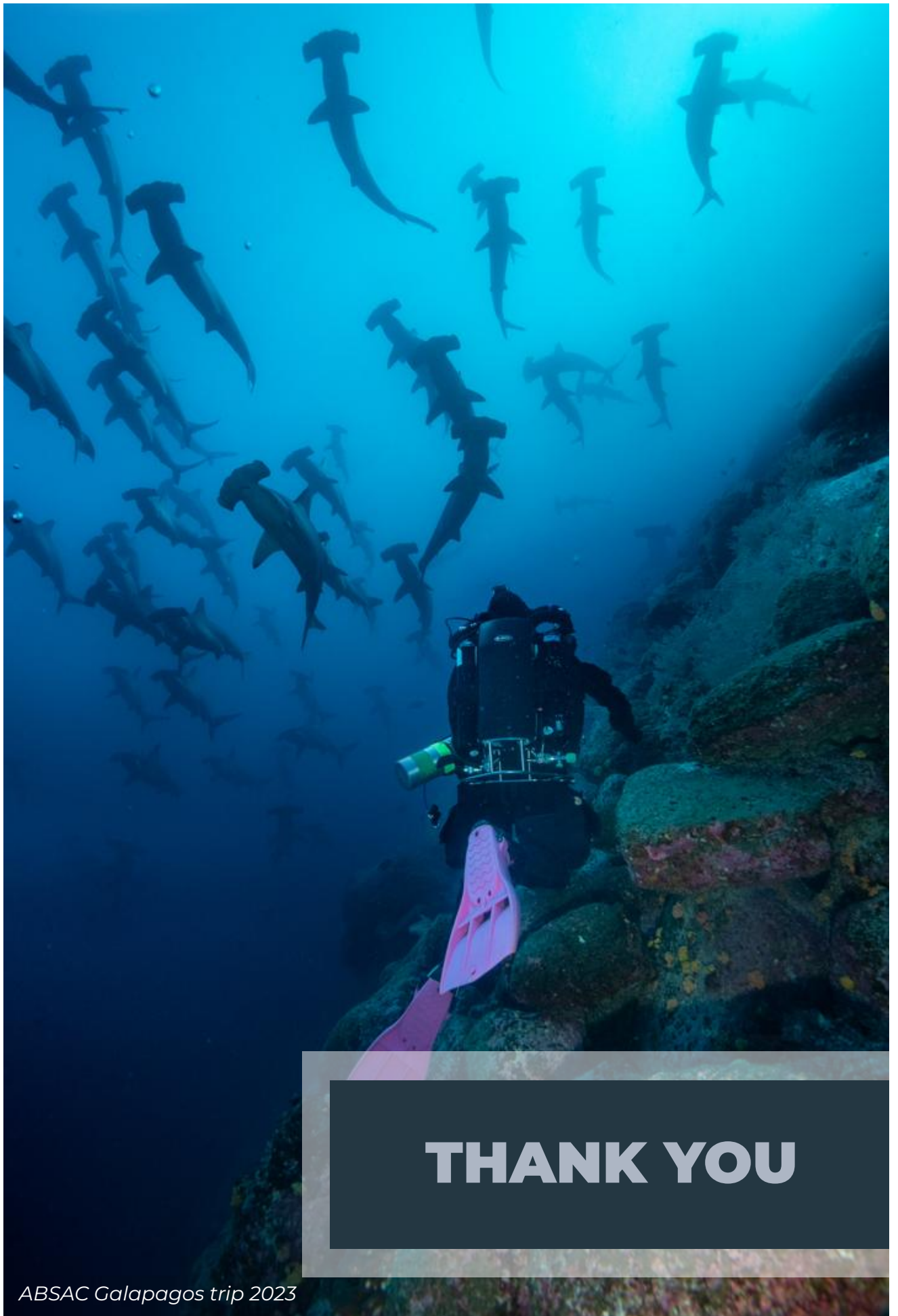
**Bob Anderson**, skipper and owner of MV Clasina, in our opinion, simply the best offshore skipper in the UK. Bob has taken us to some wonderful places to dive and shown club members what real expeditionary diving is about. He goes out of his way to help, be supportive and to get us to our destinations. Few skippers will push a 24 hour non-stop voyage to get a 48 hour weather window. Bob will!

**John Thornton**, skipper and owner of MV Karin has provided us with some super Scapa Flow trips over the years, two in 2022 alone. Always willing to give advice, John has endured our inexperienced Scapa Flow first timers with a wry smile and (sometimes) polite constructive criticism. A thoroughly decent chap and a Scapa Flow institution.

**Puffin Divers**, dive shop and PADI training organisation have been invaluable in supporting our Oban training week. Providing air, advice, free parking and putting up with our assembled masses of trainee divers experiencing their first sea dives and equipment purchases. We very much appreciate the overnight equipment repairs and drysuit patching - always ready and dry for the next day.

## References and links

- [Club Website](#)
- [Google Presence and Reviews](#)
- [Facebook Page](#)
- [Instagram Page](#)
- [Club YouTube page](#)
- [Slack](#)
- [Streak](#)
- [2022 AGM](#)
- [Mad Dog's Club Memories](#)
- [Club Strategy](#)



**THANK YOU**