

# **WHAT LIES BENEATH?**

## **SUMMARY REPORT**

**by**

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### **Introduction**

1. The BSAC Southern Region 'What Lies Beneath?' initiative (WLB) was a novel and innovative approach designed to inspire, equip and challenge BSAC members and Branches to investigate and record new unknown dive sites. The concept of WLB broke with the convention of a traditional project /expedition in that the focus was on building new skills within Branches via external and BSAC training and offering the opportunity to all grades to work together to locate, investigate and record a site. Though nominally a Southern Region initiative the initiative was open to any BSAC Branch and was designed to be as inclusive as possible with benefits for Branches and their members at all grades.
2. The major part of this report is the fantastic contribution made by 5 branches and their survey team leaders who have produced very high quality reports and as a result of their participation have benefited from the experience and are looking forward with confidence to their next project expedition. My sincere thanks to all who have expressed an interest, undertaken training, researched and planned, managed logistics, dived, photographed, sketched, videoed, measured, written, communicated, enthused, coached and mentored in order to achieve these superb results. The reports are highly professional and great pieces of work – and would stand on their own merits as fine examples of what can be achieved. The Branches who submitted reports are to be congratulated on their hard work – whether or not they actually managed to find and dive their nominated site. In this respect I am delighted with the responses and on the quantity and quality of reports I believe the initiative can be regarded as a success.
3. The main purpose of this covering report is to record the positive aspects of the WLB project but also to identify areas where there were problems or issues that may help inform other regional and multi-branch initiatives for the future. This should in no way detract from the overall success of the WLB for those who have persevered and put so much effort into the project. My apologies for the delay in producing this overall report against the overall project plan (by end December 13) which was primarily due to pain and discomfort with my hands from August 13 leading to surgery on both hands at the earlier in January and February 2014.
4. The purpose of this report is to look back at the experience of running a multi branch initiative and measure its success against the aims set out in the project plan. It also provides a learning opportunity from the issues and problems encountered as well as the results and successes.

### **Key successes;**

- a. Five branch reports completed (see attached) from Dacorum, Eastleigh, Leamington and Warwick, Reading, and Wight Dolphins.
- b. 10 BSAC members completed NAS training. Other skills and diver training carried out within branches in support of the project.
- c. One member successfully appointed by English Heritage as a Licensee for a Historic Protected wreck site.
- d. Participating Branches acknowledge benefits of taking part.

### **What Lies Beneath – the Concept**

5. What Lies Beneath was more than a traditional diving expedition project – it was a super project! Rather than a expedition of a limited number of elite/experienced divers to a remote location it was designed to be as inclusive as possible allowing multiple branches and all grades to take part in an exercise to identify unknown sites with the aim of building expertise within branches for the future and inspiring them with the confidence to investigate their underwater heritage.
6. WLB was a natural progression from my experiences in leading three successful projects within my own Branch (Southsea Sub-Aqua Club). I had shared these experiences with a number of other branches (and the wider community) and a number of branches had expressed a desire to undertake a project themselves but had no idea how to get started. Once appointed a Southern Region Projects and Expeditions Advisor in September 2012 I saw the opportunity to bring together Branches who were excited by the challenge of diving on an unidentified site and were keen to stretch their themselves to achieve something different from their normal diving. It was hoped that divers and Branches would enjoy the challenge of exploring unknown sites, benefit from working together with a purpose and be inspired to continue their work in years to come.

### **Project Aims**

7. The primary aims of this project was to provide the training and experience for Branches to undertake the underwater survey of sites along the South Coast and to inspire members undertake adventurous and meaningful projects in the future.
8. The project aims and objectives were to;
  - a) Provide a structure and support for participating Branches to be able to explore, investigate and record a number of underwater sites along the South Coast;
  - b) Promote inter-branch co-operation;
  - c) Encourage members within Branches to dive with a purpose and work as a team;
  - d) To engender a spirit of exploration and adventure by diving unknown sites;
  - e) Develop survey techniques and project management skills at Branch level;
  - f) Improve dive management and planning skills;

- g) Provide a public record of what was found at each site and the marine life present; and
- h) Promote the responsible/respectful diving and recreational diving opportunities along the South Coast and beyond.

The main focus was the development of diving and survey skills within Branches through the experience gained from exploration and recording of unknown sites.

9. A total of 18 survey team leaders from 11 Branches across the Southern Region and beyond signed up to undertake a systematic survey of charted obstructions/anomalies in the Eastern Approaches to the Solent recording what they find using the archaeological survey techniques taught by the Nautical Archaeological Society (NAS). Diving was to be managed by the individual Branches and the Diving Officer for the Branch was to be responsible for the safe conduct of diving operations. There were also to be opportunities for Branches to work together to provide additional training such as the BSAC Wreck Appreciation course which would provide basic skills to other team members from Branches taking part. There was also the opportunity to progress diver qualifications through the management of an expedition for example Dive Leader to Advanced Diver. With up to 11 branches involved it was a potential that many divers could take part in the project making it as inclusive as possible.
10. Training was to take place during the spring and early summer with Branch surveys taking place during the main summer months. The findings of each survey were to be collated by the WLB Project Leader Alison Mayor together with details of the training that has taken place and the achievements of each branch. The aim was for these to be brought together in a final report at the end of 2013 though this was delayed as a result of medical issues resulting in surgery on both of my hands in 2014.
11. The dive sites were selected to provide opportunities for all divers within a Branch to take part. (ie generally less than 20m) and a relatively benign site for them to put their survey training into practice. Whilst we were not anticipating finding anything of historic significance, these sites had little or no diver record to say what was there and so any survey would increase the public knowledge and also provide the challenge of the unknown to those divers taking part. Of course there was always the possibility that something unusual or important may emerge from the work and the possibility that the data could be of value to the wider study of the marine environment.

### **Achievement of WLB Aims**

12. In assessing the success of the project the following comments are made against each of the aims;
  - a) *Provide a structure and support for participating Branches to be able to explore, investigate and record a number of underwater sites along the South Coast;*

Following a number of meetings and presentations at the beginning of the year a communications network using Yahoo Groups was established to allow branches and team leaders to share information and work together to arrange training etc. Many

thanks to Desha Pingel of Newbury SAC for arranging this and coordinating information. There was a real buzz about the exchanges and it was clear that there was great enthusiasm to undertake training and get on site. Branches were widely spread geographically and a common environment to allow planning and information to be shared at the press of a button was key to moving forward particularly when trying to arrange training. **Achieved**

*b) Promote inter-branch co-operation;*

The Yahoo group site also provided an opportunity for branches to cooperate when dive planning. Garry McGinty of Wight Dolphins was very forthcoming with local diving information for clubs such as Leamington and Warwick SAC who had little experience and opportunity of diving in the sea. Information such as launch sites, slack water times etc as well as local dive centres, accommodation etc were readily shared between groups. There was also much discussion to try to arrange NAS training so that team leaders could share the experience together and get to know each other. **Achieved**

*c) Encourage members within Branches to dive with a purpose and work as a team;*

All of the attached reports will demonstrate a real enthusiasm, drive and determination to achieve their goal of investigating their nominated site and putting into practice their newly learnt skills. Even those who did not manage to dive or find anything remained positive about their experiences in working as a team and, whilst some had perhaps underestimated the commitment involved many carried on and completed the exercise. Details can be found in the Branch reports. **Achieved**

*d) To engender a spirit of exploration and adventure by diving unknown sites;*

The desire for adventure and to explore unknown sites is clearly reflected in the attached reports. It was clear that many Branches lacked the skills and experience necessary to undertake a wreck investigation/survey project and the thought of diving an unknown site (even in the Solent) seemed to awaken the sense of adventure and desire to try something new. In particular Leamington and Warwick Branch, who are a small land locked club (less than 30) demonstrated a real determination to take part and in many respects it was a huge adventure for them. **Achieved**

*e) Develop survey techniques and project management skills at Branch level;*

The following nominated team leaders undertook the NAS Intro and Part 1 course;

Name	Branch
Garry McGinty	Wight Dolphins
Desha Pingel	Newbury
Doug Carter	Southsea
Julie Kelley	Leamington & Warwick
Guy Freeman	Nekton
Glen Adams	Dacorum SAC

In addition at least 6 others from Branches (not nominated team leaders) also completed NAS Training though these were not specifically recorded against the project. **Partially achieved.**

*f) Improve dive management and planning skills;*

Other courses and training also took place within branches including Skill Development Courses (eg the Wreck Appreciation course held at Wight Dolphins) and under the BSAC Diver Training programme by using the opportunity to undertake dive planning and management in preparation for the dives. As a result of the problems experienced by Leamington and Warwick branch it is clear that it can be just as valuable a learning experience when things do not go entirely to plan. Details can be found in individual reports. **Achieved.**

*g) Provide a public record of what was found at each site and the marine life present;*

Each Branch has publicised the results of their surveys through their web sites and other media. This enables the wider community to find out more about the branches activities and what they have discovered through diving and research of the sites. A copy of this report will be sent to UKHO and English Heritage for the data to be included in the National Monuments Register. **Achieved.**

*h) Promote the responsible/respectful diving and recreational diving opportunities along the South Coast and beyond.*

The What Lies Beneath initiative was promoted at the London International Dive Show in early 2013 and also at a presentation given at Dacorum Sub-Aqua Club attended by more than 60 divers from 6 different dive clubs. **Achieved.**

13. On this basis it can be concluded that the What Lies Beneath initiative has been successful, though half of participating branches did not submit reports which is disappointing. It is thought that this was a culmination of several reasons – primarily;

- a. The change to the NAS training syllabus to include a e-learning route. This change meant that there were two ways of completing the training which complicated the initial thought of having one or two dedicated course for WLB team members. Some liked the idea of e-learning whilst for others it did not suit their way of learning. The wide location of Branches also meant that there was no singular course that suited all. The NAS training programme was limited in the opportunity and spaces to complete training. This change was both positive and negative in many respects.
- b. Poor weather – whilst planning may have taken place, the poor weather almost certainly lead to dives being cancelled. Branches may well have thought that they could not submit a report of any value although you will see from Wight Dolphins that this is not the case. Poor weather was also the reason given by Nekton SAC for not completing their survey and report.

- c. Financial constraints – In these days of continued austerity the cost of training and running expeditions is significant when peoples' disposable income is under pressure. This is illustrated by Leamington and Warwick branch who had agreed to sponsor Julie Kelley through the course. The Branch made the long journey down to the South Coast from the Midlands and although they set to see boat and other problems meant that the team were not successful at finding their target site. Although other dates were planned a diminishing club membership and costs of repairs to their boat etc meant that subsequent plans to dive their site were cancelled. The application for grants to support the training were partially successful but would not have covered the cost of training for all that had applied.
- d. Motivation and support – It is a significant commitment by both an individual and branch committee/members to undertake a survey project particularly those who are not close to the target area. Although the nominations for Team leaders were supported by Diving Officers without the drive, determination and leadership/support from others to see the task though it will be a struggle to complete the task. I am aware that Newbury SAC planned a visit to their site and spent some hours at sea looking for it. Disappointingly the Branch did not submit a report, presumably because they felt they had nothing to report on. However the main aim of the WLB project was to develop skills within the Branch and Desha and her team certainly demonstrated a significant level of commitment to get that far.

### **Feedback from Team Leaders and Branches**

- 14. As part of the project exercise a number of questions were asked of both team leaders and Diving Officers as part of a feedback survey. This was to try to understand the experiences of those who took part and the branches generally in order to learn what had went well and where there may be areas for improvement that can be learned should another multi branch initiative be planned in the future. A limited number of responses were received and are summarised in an annex to this report. On the whole the responses were positive but provide a number of areas where perhaps improvements can be made for the future.

### **Financial**

- 15. The initial estimated total direct cost for the project was £3,298.00 based primarily the cost of survey team leader training and a set of basic survey equipment for each Branch. Funding for this cost was sought from two sources – a BSAC Expedition Grant Scheme (BEGS) contribution of up to £1,000 and also a BSA Jubilee Trust grant for the balance of £2,298.
- 16. Financial assistance from these grants was partially successful with a £500 award payable in two instalments of £250 under the BEGS grants scheme. It had been stressed to Team leaders and Branches that financial assistance could not be guaranteed and this was accepted. At least one Branch (Leamington and Warwick) agreed to sponsor their Team Leader with the cost of training. All other costs were met by individuals. In

September 2013 BSAC Southern Region were delighted to receive a Special Initiative Award of £1500 in recognition of the WLB project. This was a very welcome surprise but came relatively late as most of the training and diving opportunities had already past.

17. As the number of Team Leaders who completed their training was less than initially envisaged and with the stipulation that only those who submitted reports should receive a contribution to their costs it is intended to make a payment of £250 per Branch with a further £50 payable when the 2<sup>nd</sup> instalment of the BEGS award is received following submission of this report. Receipts will be retained by the Southern Region Treasurer.
18. The majority of the finding will be shared between the Branches who submitted reports with an element being retained for the costs associated with managing/publicising the WLB initiative (banners/presentations/charts etc) and to support the Southern Region in the next 2014 Neptune 70 project.

### **Conclusions and lessons learned**

19. What Lies Beneath was an ambitious project which broke the mould a traditional 'Expedition'. For those Branches who succeeded in surveying their sites and submitting a report their work, as attached is of very high quality. Indeed many would stand on their own merits as a highly successful project. Even those Branches who were not successful in achieving all the aims have been inspired and invigorated by the challenge of exploring and investigating new sites and now have the skills to take on new challenges. Although a number of branches did not complete the exercise many will have learned valuable lessons as a result which will hopefully benefit them in the future.
20. For myself, as leader of the WLB project I too have learned some valuable lessons which I am taking forward to the next Southern Region initiative – Neptune 70. This project is much more basic in its approach and as is primarily a initiative to encourage Branches to dive wrecks associated with the WW2 invasion of Normandy. Rather than costly training and detailed surveys the intention is simply to record basic data (as a minimum) though obviously if Branches wish to undertake more detailed survey and research then that would be very beneficial. English Heritage has advised that the data records of wrecks associated with this period is poor so they are keen to receive anything that will help inform the public record. By taking this simplistic approach there is no need to apply for grant funding for multiple branches but still allows Branches to apply for financial assistance on their own merits. This will be much more of an incentive for them as a Branch than a share of an overall grant and removes the financial obligations on me a project leader.
21. My final lessons learned are about communications and bringing the final documentation together. Whilst the Yahoo Group did facilitate communication between team leaders and branches it did not suit everyone and this made communicating with all quite difficult at times. I would explore other social media but there is a risk of differing messages if too many communications channels are used. It is also very clear that managing a multi-branch initiative calls for a lot of effort and unless support can be found for other areas it is probably too much for any one person (with a



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full time job etc) to manage. With several Branches outside the Southern Region taking part it almost becomes a national initiative which I was not conscious of at the start.

22. I believe I was also too ambitious in planning to receive the Branch reports by the end of October 2013. Having now seen and appreciated the quality of the reports that were produced and in future I will allow a longer time for Branches to submit them after completing the practical side of the exercise. As is happened my inability to type/write which ultimately required surgery on each hand delayed the report even further which was very regrettable.
23. I hope you enjoy reading the attached reports as much as I did. The varied style and approach illustrates the individual nature of each Branch. It is clear that many have enjoyed their experiences in taking part which is very pleasing. From newly trained Ocean Divers on their first open water sea dive to experienced First Class Divers the reports clearly illustrate that there was a challenge and reward for all in taking part. I am personally delighted and very proud of what has been achieved overall.
24. My personal thanks also extend to Clive Puddifoot (Southern Regional Coach) who has mentored and supported me through my first multi-branch initiative.

Alison Mayor

Projects and Expeditions Advisor  
BSAC Southern Region

Enclosures;

1. Dacorum SAC Branch WLB Report
2. Eastleigh Branch WLB report (including video)
3. Leamington & Warwick Branch WLB Report
4. Reading Branch WLB Report
5. Wight Dolphins WLB Report
6. Summary of Feedback from Team Leaders
7. Summary of Feedback from Branch Diving Officers