

May/June 2001

Irvine

ISAC Newsletter



Committee News

BOAT

The engine of the club boat has now been serviced.

The club is about to purchase a new 'prop' for the engine. A 19" aluminium was agreed on. This will make a considerable difference to the performance of the boat.

Rab has now fixed the black strip on the boat.

The club is looking into buying a 2nd boat for the club members. Should this go ahead it will assist greatly with the dive trips and will avoid to many disappointments with regards refusals as one boat fills up very quickly.

B.D.O.

Jim Craig is looking for people to volunteer with the Tuesday Nights lectures. If you are interested please contact Jim.

Compressor.

Brian Nesbitt is looking into an annual service agreement for the compressor.

Clubhouse

Lorna, Rab, Paul and Brian are getting suitable quotes for to insure the clubhouse and it's contents.

Secretary

Trevor has received acknowledgement for the Lottery with regards a grant for new equipment. Trevor has requested £5000.00. So here's hoping.

Expeditions

Brian is organizing a one day trip to Oban on the 17/06/2001. It's a good day but a long one . Contact Brian if you are interested.

Newsflash

Remember, if anyone is wishing to attend a committee meeting they are more than welcome. 1st Thursday of every month at 7.30pm. More importantly, if you are in a position to help with any of the above points we would love to hear from you.

The 2001 Boat Handling Course

Practical Training

Frank Long's reminiscence on the day.

It was a nice sunny day, a little windy perhaps but nothing that concerned me. I was ready to be one of five club members to have practical training in boat handling.

Hugh, Derek, Dave, Rose and I were all as keen as mustard and all quietly confident that this little exercise was going to be a piece of cake, like riding a bike!



Willie, our tutor for the day was about to encounter something that not even he was prepared for. His ability as a teacher was about to have its biggest test yet. We all met at 9.30am in the clubhouse, kitted up in our wet suits ready for action. Willie handed out the notes and commenced the initial briefing. Learning how to drive a boat has a lot more to it than just moving it when it is in the water. You must first go through all the things that you might need for the day. You must learn the basic rules of the boat, things to be done before moving the trailer, like knowing where the key for the garage door is, so you can get the boat out of the club house, all helps. We made our way to the slip only to find that someone placed a pile of timber logs across the slip preventing Willie to lower the boat into the water. Lumber jack techniques were immediately called for, all hands to the decks. Within minutes we were on our way, riding the Waves.

We all took our turn in getting familiar with ever aspect of the boat. Getting accustomed to the waves, not to over 'rev' the engine and above all tell your ship mates of any sudden movements you are planning, preferably in advance of doing them.



As the day progressed so did we, however it was starting to get silently competitive but no one was saying. Hugh was good on the turns, Dave was best at riding the waves, but the serious stuff was the rescue and we all wanted to be the best. It kills me to say it, but the one female amongst us was beginning to excel above the rest. Did we care, no, it was turning out to be a fun day and that's all that mattered as well as getting better seamen and women. Our hunger was now creeping in so over to Troon for lunch. Willie decided that as we approached the harbour we should practice landing the boat, before lunch. I am sure to this day that he was sorry he ever mentioned it, and poor Rab must have been twitching where-ever he was. After lunch we started our trip back, this is when the fun really started. We had to practice positioning the boat using a minimum of two landmarks. Late afternoon was upon us and Willie decided that we all did extremely well. Then it was back to the clubhouse for the de-briefing.



Thank you Willie, we had a great day and we now have some idea of what to do.

“Shug’s First Dook” A novices tale.

Notification of successfully securing a place in the Club Boat arrived on a February Saturday evening in the form of a message from Willie Lee : “Don’t take anything in the boat that can’t get wet ! ”

I carefully threw the main items I would need into a large carry bag and tried to think of what would be the schedule for next day. A wee shock of realisation ran around my mind: “What have I let myself in for now ? ”

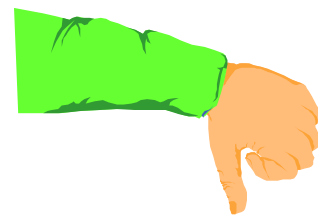
I decided to don the undersuit in the house to conserve heat and a rather wintery Sunday morning found me at the clubhouse @ 8.30am and the first task was a top up to the air cylinders to ensure maximum dive time before loading them into the boat. Then it was trying to assist Glen & Willie in bringing out the boat and trailer and hitching it to the Leemobile 4-wheel drive. I was graciously offered a seat in the back amongst the forest of dog hair from Willie’s pooch but enjoyed the banter on the way up the road to the normal winter launch site at Cardwell Bay in Gourrock. Upon arrival, the weather had degenerated to sleety snow and a perishing cold wind. This site usually gave shelter from the winds for launching the boat, but “Nae luck”, all conspired against dive organiser Jim Craig today. Back to Largs was the decision.

Finally time to prepare while the rest launched the boat at Largs slip. Suited up with gloves and woolly ski bunnies, I lugged the dive bag down to the boat and scrambled aboard. Oh, Oh, I thought. Why are they all putting on goggles and covering their faces with balaclavas? I soon found out when Jamie opened up the throttle and took off like a bat out of hell. They suggested I stand upright to absorb the shocks as we battered through the waves and the spray cascaded over us all. Good grief, you pay good money for this kind of ride at Alton Towers. I also know why Willie said “Don’t bring anything onboard that can’t get wet” as everything was sopping wet in no time. At least it’s nice and dry in the dry suit but the fingers started to get a bit numb as we headed north.

The experienced ones were diving the “Kintyre” off Skelmorlie first for the deep dive.

Some “techy” divers were there already with Peter Moir and his boat and they were trying out their recirculation gear, so we moored beside them and I watched our lot kit up and go down 2 or 3 at a time. Gosh, the buddy check was not much like the ritual Jim puts us through in the pool, I thought and look at all that ironmongery they clip on. How will they get back up with all that junk attached ? Frank seemed to have a problem and surfaced soon after going down. Some kind of suit inflation problem but he seemed to have been @ 30 metres anyway. However, after the successful dive, this apparently stimulated the appetite and most folk started getting stuck into some pieces and hot soup.

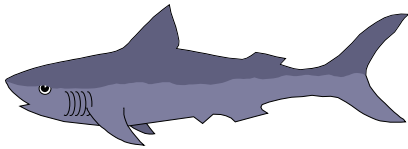
Now it was time to find a suitable location to chuck me overboard. Back down to Wemyss Bay for a nice 5 metre spot. It was determined by Jim that I would go in with Junior and Rose to shepherd me around. After a buddy check with no tricks from poolside tricks from Jim, the moment arrived for a splish backwards over the side just like pool spacebowl practice. I felt like the India Rubber man with so much air inside the suit flopping about on the surface but “Hey, this is fun”. Felt a loose fin and had some help from side of boat to tighten it up then off to the mooring rope to start the decent.



OK sign and down we go. Air out of stab jacket and also by lifting the cuff dump arm up to vent the drysuit but not going down. Resort to pulling myself down the anchor rope. To the bottom, equalised ears en route and detect that I may be a bit light on weight. Now I found out why they had all the ironmongery as Junior started clipping hammers and other weights onto me. That’s a bit better. Neutral boyancy check. “Nae bother”. Time for a look about now.

Sandy bottom, surprisingly clear and a few bits of sealife scuttling about. They said later about 3 metres viz. Headed off along the slope with Junior leading beside me and Rose playing about with her camera taking some snaps on my deeper slope side. Surprised at the large number of wee and big hermit crabs chasing each other and either humping or eating each other.

A few stringy black or white flat worms and a furry sea slater were pointed out by Junior. Not feeling the cold much at all, a lot better than in the boat earlier. Air noises quite comforting and discovered that blowing slightly through nose into the mask bubbles some warm air into each side of the hood to heat up the ears quite nicely. Also quite comforting that Junior & Rose keep checking that things are Ok and keep pointing out new bits of sealife. Oops, another problem with that fin feeling loose again. Point it out Junior and he helps sort it out as side clip had popped open.



A few starfish around and I dangle a couple from the ears and Rose tries to take a picture of me with my "earings". I've been trying to use the compass but it's a bit of a mystery as it seems to swing around and show different bearings all the time. (Four or five dives later discover it's faulty). All good things eventually come to an end and Junior signals the up sign. Ready, off we go and cuff dumping some air as we ascend. Surprisingly gentle rise and slowly break surface then press some air into the stab jacket and drysuit. Wow, what a feeling of exhilaration. Junior signals the boat and we bob around waiting and chatting. Now the tricky bit of how to get the weight belt off without dropping it. Oops, nearly lost it, as it was about to slip through my heavily gloved fingers. Again this is just like the practice at the poolside. Hand up the gear bit by bit, slip the jacket catches and shrug off the apparatus. Help with a boost on the bottom of the cylinder into the boat. Now to see if I can flop up and over into the boat. A couple

of bounces and I slither up and over like a stranded whale. Somebody is wrestling the fins off me as I gather my breath in the chill wind. I feel as though I must be twittering like a budgie as I try to share the events with the others but the message from Junior is that I was "very calm and steady" so that must be Ok. I discover that I had a total of 15 minutes bottom time. Surely that can't be right. It felt like ages.

After a suitable wait, I learn that I have a second shot going under with the BDO accompanying. Whilst kitting up, my hands have lost their feeling in the cold. Jim shows me another tip by pouring some hot juice inside my gloves. Golly, that's what my fingers feel like!

Another 15 minutes of exploration and wonderful sensations comes all too soon to an end and I am a bit sharper in getting a better grip on the weight belt when getting back into the boat.

Finally time to try to gobble down some sandwiches as they tidy up the gear for the return journey. But they are a bit too dry and I'm still hyped up with the excitement. Another freezing cold, wave crashing, rollercoaster ride back to Largs at Jamie's dragonpower throttle setting.

Help hold the boat at the slip whilst Willie goes off to de-kit at the Leemobile and then return with the trailer for the boat. I slip off the gear in the car park beside the Leemobile and struggle with trying to get the suit cuffs over my frozen hands without tearing the seals. Now it's off to Largs Marina, when everything's packed away, for a wee refreshment and write up. Oops, I make a "faux pas" by asking for a pint of lager and hot chocolate. I am let off for good behaviour and ignorance of post dive convention.

On the return journey to take the boat back a warm sensation returns to my frozen body and I have to try hard not to fall asleep in the back of the Leemobile.

A final assessment as I wearily struggle in to the house to annoy Zoe with news of my first Dook.

"That wiz great! If I enjoyed it under those freezing cold conditions there's no holding me back! When's the next dive?"