



November 2020

### Notes from the Chair

Welcome to the November newsletter. I hope you are all well. To say it has been a difficult year is an understatement.

We are all well aware that the Coronavirus has severely restricted our ability to meet. This has resulted in the cancellation of some pool training sessions. It has also meant that we have been unable to have any Trust holidays this year. Sadly we have also decided that the Christmas Lunch and awards presentation will not take place this year.

Some things, however, do not change. We are still working to secure funding as expenses continue even when we are not active. We have managed to keep things ticking over and we are hoping that some recent grant applications will be successful.

**Amanda Ford** has resigned as a Trustee for personal reasons. She hopes to continue training and contributing to the Trust. We thank her for all her work and efforts that have really benefitted the Trust.

We were in a great position where a number of names were put forward by the Trustees as possible replacements for Amanda and I am pleased to say that **Simon Licence** has agreed to take on the role and we welcome him to the group. Simon has included a short introduction later in this newsletter.

It just remains for me to sincerely say I hope to see you all soon. Take care.

**Eric**

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### Risk Assessment

Thanks to **Jenny Quarterman** and **Jackie Abbs** for updating our Risk Assessment to deal with this pandemic of Covid 19. Without Jenny and Jackie's hard work, we would not have



been able to re-start our pool sessions as quickly as we were able to, and as soon as the green light was given by the government that swimming pools could reopen, we were able to start pool sessions within the new boundaries.

### **Heathfield School & Try Dives**

Heathfield School swimming pool finally reopened its doors in August, just in time for our sessions to re-commence. We thought things would settle down and get back to some kind of normality with adjustments for our bubbles of six, face masks when not in the water, no showers or changing rooms. How wrong we were, and now we're back in another lockdown. Only time will tell.

**Howard Sobey** works very hard to put each month's pool sessions together, so please, when you receive the monthly email, please respond to it. If you are instructing, please confirm with your student(s) the arrangements for the following session they are attending so that you can let Howard know. He can then let **Michael and Dean** know if additional kit is needed on the van.

**Nicole Smart** is bringing tea, coffee and cakes down to each pool session so please support her fundraising efforts by putting your donation in the collection box before consuming the cakes and refreshments. The cakes are yummy, and has raised over £120 so far!

**A few polite reminders** : Please remember that pool sessions start at the time stated on the email sent out and finish two hours later, promptly, (unless otherwise stated), and we have to be out of the pool 2 hours from the time we start as there is often a group following on and cleaning & clearing up needs to take place. Please plan to arrive NO MORE than 10 minutes before the start. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on the school grounds. This is not our policy but the schools, and must be adhered to. If you wish to smoke you must leave the school grounds. Any kit you are using must be broken down and returned to the van. If you are teaching, it is good practice for students to carry this out as part of their course and everyone's help is appreciated in clearing up. If during a pool session you notice a problem with any piece of Scuba Trust kit, please place the faulty item on the front seat of the van. This will greatly assist us in keeping all kit in a serviceable condition.



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## The Van and Kit under Covid 19

Our thanks go to **Michael Smart, Dean Humphries** and **Mark Harrison**. During the whole period of lockdown, these guys worked on the van, getting it completely fitted out and Covid 19-ready.

Please bear in mind after each pool sessions ends, due to pandemic and government regulations, all items of kit that have been used must now to be sanitised. This mammoth task is undertaken by Michael and Dean.

### Kit servicing

We have had some kit serviced at the beginning of this year. However, as servicing has a limited shelf-life, servicing has been put on hold until such a time it is required again.

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## Courses

Congratulations to **Tabbi, Mel, Stuart** and **Diego** on completing their Open Water course and Stuart and Diego going on and completing their Advanced Open Water course, all in the chilly waters of Vobster Quay. In addition, all four of them actually were able to travel out to Egypt to sample the delights of the Red Sea. Well done to you all and your perseverance in these difficult times. (We're not really jealous about Egypt!)

Congratulations to **Michael and Dean** on completing their Rescue course. Both are now Divemasters in Training under the ever-watchful gaze of Liam Coffey. (This is where the real work starts, guys!).

### EFR Course

We are working hard to come up with a solution to run an EFR refresher course within the regulations set out so we comply with Covid 19 directions. I think most that

undertook the last refresher course are due to re-take it this year. As soon as we can, the refresher will go ahead; so watch this space and our Facebook page.

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### Zoom

During the lockdown, **Dee and Liam Coffey** ran a quiz night each Friday evening using Zoom. We had participants from the far-flung corners of the globe logging in to join in the quiz. All those that logged in appeared to enjoy the two plus hours of questions, and even though we couldn't get everyone up on one screen at the same time, it was very successful. A big thank you to Dee and Liam for sorting it out.



### Paperwork!

We finally managed to get the accounts for 2018/19 back from the accountants. They too had problems with working through the lockdown, but the accounts have now been published on the Charity Commission website. As soon as the end of Lockdown 1 came, the accounts for 2019/20 were given to the accountants. We have also had these signed off and they have also now been published on the Charity Commission's site.

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## Holidays, Christmas Dinner & Annual Awards

What can I say? At the moment, probably like many of yourselves, we are in limbo. We had a trip to Sharm booked for May and this has been moved to 2021. We did contact everyone on the trip initially when the pandemic hit, and as soon as there is anything to update you all with, I will be in touch. We also had a trip being put together for Aruba for 2021 but we will have to evaluate the situation next year. Hopefully by then this virus will have been sorted.

As the Christmas Dinner and Annual Awards have been put on hold this year, **would everyone who got an award last year please keep hold of it, please?** Hopefully next year's Christmas Dinner will take place and normal activities will resume.

**Frank**

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## Trustees

The Trustees have been working hard to keep things moving behind the scenes during the pandemic. Several grants have been applied for and we are waiting to hear if we have been successful.

**Amanda Ford** has decided to stand down as a Trustee. We would like to thank Amanda for all her hard work and dedication as a trustee and Instructor with the Trust over the years. We all wish Amanda good luck with her ongoing adventures.

We would like to welcome **Simon Licence** who joins the Trustees, filling the void left by Amanda's departure. I'll let Simon introduce himself for those who don't know him:

*“Hi!*

*For those of you that don't know me, I have been a member of the Scuba Trust since 2011 and feel lucky to have found such a supportive and generous group of friends to holiday and spend time with.*



*I became disabled in 1997 after a sporting accident and had thought that my sporting and adventuring days were over. Never would I have imagined myself diving with sharks or swimming through the Cenotes in Mexico.*

*It is due to the support and dedication of the Trustees and volunteers that I have had the opportunities to dive across the world. I feel thrilled and honoured to have been asked to become a Trustee and I will do all I can to support the Trust going forward.”*

**Simon**

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### **How to support Scuba Trust.**

As someone who already supports us by being a Friend of the Trust, please consider helping a little bit more. As with every charity, fundraising this year has been particularly difficult, and our annual cost for maintaining equipment and the van hasn't reduced.

**It won't cost you anything:** Did you know that [Amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk) will make a donation for most purchases you make?

For the Scuba Trust to benefit, you will need to access Amazon via [www.smile.amazon.co.uk](https://www.smile.amazon.co.uk) and choose “Scuba Trust” as your charity, as we will receive a donation from most purchases.

**Give a one time gift.**

**Donations can be made through PayPal**

<https://www.paypal.com/uk/fundraiser/charity/3130947>

**Or via SponsorMe**

The donations page is ready for you to give Scuba Trust a Christmas present

<https://www.sponsorme.co.uk/scubatruster/2020donations>

(We use the Charities Trust site rather than Just Giving as they take less commission and do not charge an annual fee to register.)

Don't forget to tick Gift Aid if you are a tax payer.

**Regular gifts**

Does your employer use payroll-giving. Make a donation to Scuba Trust and you will receive tax relief.

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### Facebook & Twitter

A big thank you to everyone who posts on our Twitter and Facebook pages, to **Pippa Ashley** who monitors Facebook for us and to **Suzanne Harper** who looks after our Twitter account, @ScubaTrust .

### Spreading the message

Many of the instructors are now able to teach a full range of PADI, BSAC, DE and DDI courses so we are able to spread the enjoyment of diving further. Do you know of any organisations that would benefit from hearing about the Scuba Trust, and how regardless of the disability, diving is an accessible activity. Please contact any of the Trustees who will be happy to help.

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### **AND FINALLY...**

In case you are pining for a holiday report, Howard has put pen to paper, or rather, digits to keyboard, to provide us with an account and photos of a trip to the Farne Islands.

### **FARNE ISLAND TRIP 2020.**

*Well, 2020 has been a very strange year. With no Scuba Trust overseas holidays taking place, I thought I would let you all know about a trip that I organised to the Farne Islands. The Farne islands are a group of islands about 50 miles north of Newcastle on the English north-east coast. To dive in the U.K. you need a dry suit, hood and gloves and a certain kamikaze nature to endure the 11 degree temperatures. If this article is likely to make you jealous, please go no further and skip to the end of this article.*

*There were originally eight of us going on this trip: Eric, Ian, Charlotte, Sarah, Akiko, Boggie, Trevor and myself. Trevor, Akiko, Sarah and Boggie are members of The Argonauts which is a BSAC club based in Victoria, London. Trevor and Akiko have also been instructing or helping at our try dives. Charlotte was one of the group from the Sunbury air cadets that we trained in conjunction with WAG club. Charlotte gained her Sports Diver qualification this year. She also helps at our try dives. Eric and Ian are hopefully well known to you all.*



*Initially it was planned for four days diving in the Farnes. Eric had to drop out as he had to self-isolate for fourteen days after returning from abroad. Michael Smart was invited to join us but initially he could not do the first two days so I contacted Gary at Divestay in Eyemouth and booked a fifth day of diving. Then Michael could not get the time off anyway.*

*There was a great deal of discussion over the Covid regulations, particularly as the North East had been put into special restrictions. We were doing an outdoor organised activity so we were allowed to be a group of seven. But as soon as we left the harbour we would have had to split up into groups of less than six. Then that changed to complete separation due to being of different households. We could meet again at the accommodation but only outside. It all got very complicated.*

*We were due to leave on the Sunday. However, the day before I received an alarming phone call from the skipper of the dive boat. He said that the week's weather forecast was not good. Monday looked 50/50, Tuesday slightly better, Wednesday and Thursday forecast 60 mph winds from the south west. So it looked like we could only get one day's diving in. I contacted Gary in Eyemouth he said that unlike the Farnes, which are four or five miles out to sea, he can keep close to the cliffs and if the wind is coming off the land, we would be relatively sheltered. He put our chances of going out on Wednesday and Thursday at 50/50. I phoned everyone to get their opinions. Ian, Trevor and Akiko decided to "chicken out" of the trip (It's okay - I can say that as they would have skipped to the end of the article anyway!)*

*Sarah and Boggie were already in Darlington visiting family so they were happy to carry on and go for walks if necessary. Charlotte and I were both of the opinion that any break would be good after the year it had been.*

*So we travelled the 380 miles up to Seahouses. The accommodation was a block of converted stables. I got my own room with en suite which was nice and clean and a bargain at £25 a night. The next morning we went down to the harbour hoping we would be lucky but the skipper said the weather was not right. So we had a day of walking round Holy Island and watching people on the beach throwing balls for their over-enthusiastic labradors.*





*The next day the skipper turned up at the harbour with a big OK sign. We were going diving! Yay! The first dive was not the best as we were close to the shore and the wave action overhead was rocking us backward and forward. The visibility wasn't great.*

*Then we saw our first seal!*

*It swam around us until curiosity got the better of it. It approached us as we hovered in the kelp. I know they are attracted to bright colours and my dry suit has a bright yellow stripe on the arm so I held out my arm. The curious seal sniffed and then opened its mouth and gently closed its jaws round my arm. They use their mouths to investigate things, so I hoped this was what the seal was doing. With a bite three times harder than a dog it was probably a very stupid thing to do but then again I am not known for my brains. Luckily he was very gentle and did not puncture my dry suit and our first seal encounter had been accomplished.*

*The next dive the viz was better. I buddied Sarah and we had several curious seals tugging at our fins and performing underwater gymnastics just for our enjoyment. All too soon the dive had to come to an end (we had done an hour), and we put up an SMB. The seals thought this was great fun and flitted from us at our six-metre safety stop to the surface to play with the SMB and back again.*

*By now the weather forecast had changed, and although Wednesday was going to be rougher than Tuesday, it would still be possible to dive. The first dive that day was on a site called The Pinnacles which was a wall dive to a depth of 17m. We did not see any seals until the end but it was a fantastic dive. Charlotte, my buddy, stopped and pointed at the sea bed. There is nothing there.... No wait!.... it was an Angler Fish. Wow! Amazing. The Angler Fish is definitely an 'A' list sighting. There are different members of the Angler Fish group which includes the monk fish and some weird looking deep sea varieties. Later on Boggie remarked that he had seen one once, about 30 years ago!*



*We carried on and out of a crevice popped an octopus which quickly hid in another crevice and did an excellent impression of turning into a rock. After a while it realised it had been rumbled as the nosy divers were not going away. So it decided to flush a white colouration through its body. It was obviously getting quite annoyed. We decided to move on before we were inked.*

*Back on the boat, I was dismayed to learn that during this dive Charlotte had also observed a Lemon nudibranch. All those that know me, know my love for nudies so you will not be surprised that I was heartbroken that I had not seen it.*

*On the way back to the harbour, we were treated to what seemed like half an hour's worth of a ballet of leaping dolphins accompanying the boat. Even the skipper wanted a copy of the video footage which shows how good the show was.*

*Thursday was more seals including one posing on a rock for a photograph. I think it wanted us to get its best side!*



*We then drove up the road 30 miles just into Scotland to Eyemouth for our extra day of diving. That night we were able to go out and eat together as we were now in Scotland that had different Covid rules.*

*It was great to see Gary again as we had previously had a Scuba Trust trip there, as Sue and Lindsay Harper will remember (**Editor's Note: Yes we do!**). His boat is spacious and his hand, 'Dougie', looked after us brilliantly. He even brought out a kettle of warm water to rinse our hood and gloves before we put them on so they were nice and warm. After the first dive Boggie admitted it was his 1500<sup>th</sup> dive. If we had known that beforehand we would have made him do it naked. We saw scorpion fish, a dover sole, lobsters, crabs and got lost in shoal of mackerel.*

*On the previous Saturday it had looked like we would only get one day's diving out of five. We ended up with four out of five dives. U.K. diving is never guaranteed, but when it is good it is spectacularly good.*

*Eric, Ian, Trevor and Akiko - you can start reading again now!*

*Howard*