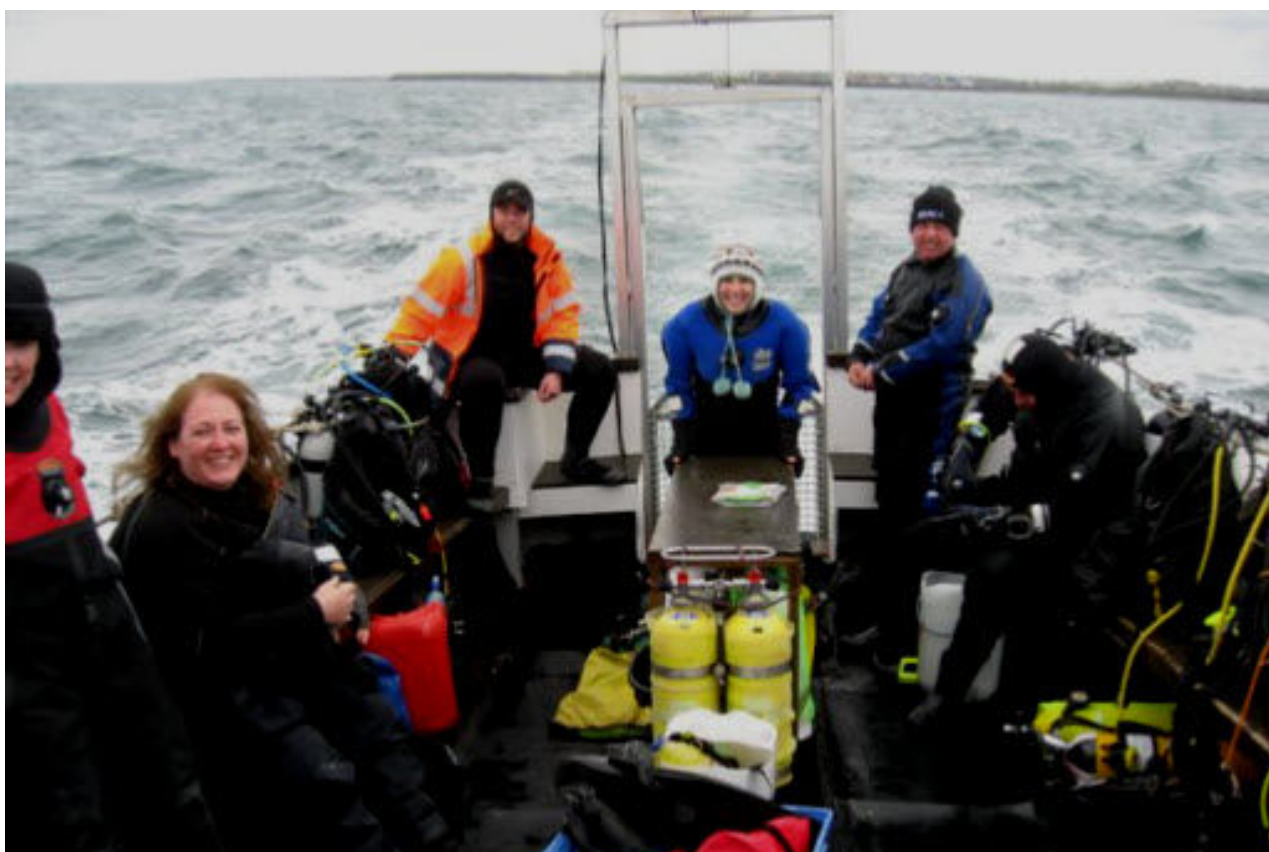


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HULL BRANCH NO 14
BRITISH SUB-AQUA CLUB
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THE FARNES



TAKING THE ROUGH WITH THE SMOOTH

30th April – 3 May: Farne Islands

When we set off on Friday morning, the weather forecast was somewhat unpromising. Other bad omens included the DO's car being rammed by a stationary lamppost the day before the trip. The DO insisted he could still open and close the car door, but preferred to clamber over the passenger seat to get in and out.

The plan was to head up to St Abbs for a shore dive and possibly a chocolate fudge brownie or two before checking into our weekend's accommodation in Seahouses. Our luck held and lunchtime found us sitting in the sunshine at the greasy spoon at Scotch Corner tucking into some excellent black pudding sarnies. Chris Rees, who dived with the club last season, joined Sarah, Tony and Bob at St Abbs to make up a quartet of "real divers" for a check-out dive round Seagull Rock. Deciding that he needed to add some more weight, the DO proceeded to scoff not one, but two chocolate fudge brownies at the harbour tea room.

We made it to Seahouses and checked into the Olde School House B&B with plenty of time to spare for sampling the local provender. The Hull BSAC crowd soon assembled in the Ship pub on the harbour. Elaine and Helen arrived just in time for last orders, but made up for lost time by making their first drink a bottle of wine. The DO was much taken with the Alnwick rum and had 5 or so, which he claimed much improved his diving experience the following day.

Bright and early(ish) on Saturday morning, we assembled on the quay-

side and loaded our kit onto our boat for the weekend, Sovereign II. Departure was delayed by the absence of Tony. As he finally came down the steps, the skipper was heard to remark, "Last on the boat? He must be the DO, they're always the same". The boat was well laden with provisions: an army-sized supply of flapjacks provided by Chris and homemade choc chip cookies from Sam. The first dive on Saturday was at "Gun Rock". Although visibility was affected by the recent poor weather, there was plenty of wildlife to be seen. Sarah and Elaine were quite pleased to have seen a Sunstar, but were beaten by Chris and Sam, who spotted an octopus. Sadly, Chris had not yet received one of Bob's photography masterclasses and didn't use manual white balance to photograph his octopus. Bob had octopus envy but did not see one. Helen's fin was an early kit casualty. It snapped in half while she was trying to keep up with Tony on Saturday's first dive. Fortunately, the skipper had a spare pair on board so all was not lost. The second dive of the day was at "Blue Caps", which included a small cave, where we disturbed some mermaids, but sadly no seals.

Saturday evening saw more masterclasses on the use of manual white balance from Bob, although he failed to find the manual white balance on Chris' camera. The DO helpfully joined in the search, looking in a cupboard and under the bed. He didn't find the manual white balance, but he did find a dive computer, which he couldn't find a use for, and a tube of KY jelly, which came in handy for getting in and out of his car. There was also a second kit ca-

sualty: Chris repaired a possible nick in his dry suit cuff seal, but slipped whilst removing a tie wrap with a Stanley knife and made a gapping hole in the arm of his dry suit

Blustery weather greeted us on Sunday morning, and there was some doubt about whether the boat would go out at all. After a period of about on the quayside, our patience was rewarded and we set off. Conditions were variable due to the deflection of the wind and currents around the islands, and the skipper found a sheltered spot to drop us near Longstone Lighthouse. Chris jumped in for his 2 minute dive wearing a semi-dry. It has been suggested that he was aspiring to be a "real man" like Jim, who, despite the 8 degree water temperature dived in a semi-dry for the whole weekend. Gavin took a compromise approach, starting the dive in a dry suit which had magically transformed into a wetsuit by the time he surfaced due to a leaking inflation valve. The DO, famed worldwide for winning a super sexy dive computer, left said computer on the boat instead of taking it diving. Rumour has it he was scared of getting it wet! The dive went well, apart from Gavin and Simon Precious finding a rough patch to surface in. The pair, like James Bond, were shaken but not stirred, and it was decided that we should bin the second dive and we returned early to Seahouses.

Sarah, Tony, Bob, Chris and Sam headed for Bamburgh Castle for a spot of culture and a visit to the tea room and were most upset to find they weren't eligible for a family ticket to reduce the £8 entry price, although Sarah thought it was well worth it for the collection of medieval and early modern weaponry. Sarah

was tasked by the DO with buying a bottle of the now infamous Alnwick rum, and was shocked and somewhat flattered to be asked to prove her age.

Pete conducted some excellent and original research into curry house menus and we ended up in the Curry Leaf, passing round Gavin's phall sauce. By Monday morning, the weather had worsened and the skipper called off the day's diving. Simon Precious showed his dedication by taking a trip to 8 Acre Lake on the way home, which he said was much calmer. Simon Moir conducted the closing ceremony to the weekend by presenting Sam with the Snickers Prize, consisting of a week's supply of Snickers (about 48), which she generously shared with the rest of us. Sam's fears of getting nitrogen narcosis proved groundless, having managed only 13m all weekend. We all had one last laugh at the DO scrambling into his car from the passenger side and set off home. The DO's car troubles were eclipsed by Chris': by Saturday morning he was unable to progress beyond first gear. The gear box was repaired with cable ties, and Chris headed back to Newcastle armed with a handful of the DO's cable ties, under strict instructions not to use reverse unless he really had to.

All in all, it was an excellent weekend with a fantastic group of people. Many thanks to Gavin for organising such good and reasonably priced accommodation and diving.

Sarah ("I must be nice to the DO") Clinch, Bob ("Manual White Balance") Higson and Tony ("I might be talking a load of shite") Hodge.

Tony Hodge



Elaine receives her Sports Diver Awards at the AGM



Andy Moss won the tankard for the best UK picture of the year



Terry Hutchinson was presented with his Sports Diver Awards

PICTURES FROM THE AGM



Phil Reese is congratulated by DO Tony Hodge



Simon Precious was presented with his Ocean Diver Award



Chris Storey received the tankard for the best overseas picture of the year