

January 2009 – D.O. Article

This months safety feature comes from the BSAC web-site, entitled 'Sometimes your just get lucky', by Jim Watson, BSAC Safety & Development Manager.

Hope you enjoy reading. Thanks Neale.

Sometimes you just get lucky!

Many years ago, towards the end of a dive in the Falls of Lora, Oban, I came across a lost shot weight belt. At the time being a student I could not afford such high class equipment myself so I was more than a little pleased at the find. It was near the end of the dive and the time came when we had to surface before making it back to the shore and with a suit and BC fully inflated it wasn't until I was half way to the surface with the BC overpressure valve venting itself and air escaping through the neck seal, actually resulting in a perfect ascent rate, that I began to consider that this wasn't really a brilliant idea! Still we surfaced safely but then discovered that the now ebbing tide was against the prevailing wind and the surface was somewhat choppy!!!

I have to admit to considering a number of options on the way back to shore, including dropping my own 'common or garden belt' but there was no way I was going to give up my prize. After much effort (some say sheer bloody mindedness) however, we made it back to shore. My new treasure got a great deal of valuable service over the years until, following a 1 hour dive in Loch Fyne, the 1m layer of -1 degree surface water took effect in less than 10 seconds and it returned to the seabed it obviously was destined for, but that is another story...

At the time DSMBs were unknown and I didn't carry a lifting bag. Had I had the use of either it could have made the whole experience less stressful and safer.



Jim Watson

Safety & Development Manager

Extra weight

We have covered in the past the importance of correct weighting and the ability, and importance, of ditching weight in an emergency. There are, however, times when we add additional weight during the course of a dive that may have implications that we have not previously considered.

Marine Life appreciation

Once you have sampled and really appreciated the exquisite taste of a finely cooked scallop it is not surprising that given the opportunity to collect some of these delicacies when you happen on a bed of them that you may be lucky enough to collect enough for your own use. Because you tend to collect them over a period of time you may not appreciate how much additional weight they actually constitute until the time comes to ascend. Firstly, avoid the temptation to attach the bag to yourself as in an emergency it will likely be impossible to ditch quickly enough. Secondly, carefully consider using a separate source of buoyancy for it to ensure you do not have to compensate for the additional weight. The simple action of attaching your DSMB to the bag before deployment should ensure its safe ascent to the surface and leave you free to concentrate on your own ascent.

Treasure

Fewer dives these days set out to deliberately recover artefacts from wrecks and if they do then typically they go prepared with suitable lifting bags. However, if you are tempted by an impromptu find and don't have the requisite bag then the principles above still apply. Alternatively if the find is too large to be raised on a DSMB then you might be safer marking the location with the SMB line and returning properly equipped to recover it.

Equipment

Carrying increasing amounts of equipment for particular dives can result in significant changes in your buoyancy characteristics and it is essential that you compensate for these changes. Just as important is the ability to ensure that where mandatory decompression stops are required that inadvertent loss of kit can be avoided (eg accidentally dropping a weight belt) because it will impact on your ability to conduct those stops.

Think SAFE – Dive SAFE

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