

# SOUTH CHINA DIVING CLUB

EXPLORING UNDERWATER HONG KONG SINCE 1979

BSAC Heinke Trophy 2019



BRANCH  
1097

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Hí there,

Thank you for taking the time to read our entry for the the 2019 Heínke Trophy. It's been a busy year at the South China Diving Club and we're really happy to share our journey.

- All your friends at SCDC

# Introduction

1.1 Who Are SCDC?

1.2 Club History

1.3 Document Development



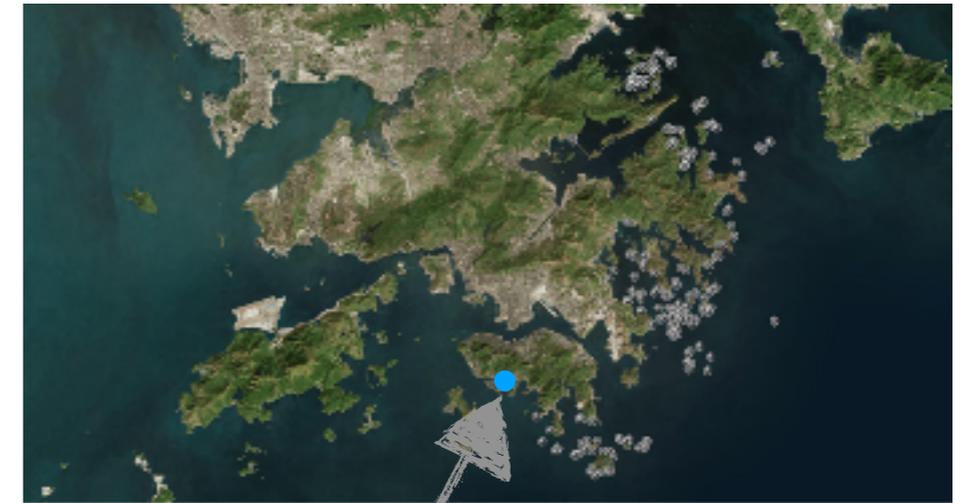
# Introduction

## 1.1 Who Are SCDC?

The South China Diving Club is an overseas branch of BSAC, located in Hong Kong. Known as the Fragrant Harbour, Hong Kong is a natural harbour, in close proximity to the Pearl River Delta on the South China Sea.

Hong Kong has a subtropical climate, owing to its location south of the Tropic of Cancer, and is heavily influenced by monsoons. The waters are temperate and heavily influenced by the seasons. Tidal range is approximately 2.5m with rocky shores that support a wide variety of coral and other marine life.

The club dives year-round in Hong Kong and takes advantage of its proximity to the diving paradise that is South East Asia.



**Hong Kong (SAR)**

*Home of the South China Diving Club*



*We are here!*

# Introduction

## 1.1 Who Are SCDC?

It's not uncommon for members to be asked, "What's so special about the South China Diving Club?" And the answer, of course, depends on which member you ask. For some, it's **a safe environment where diving skills can be honed** and learned from the wealth of experience within the club. For others, it's a **fun place to catch up with friends over a beer** (and several bottles of red wine) and swap stories about our latest adventures. But that's only part of the story...

Hong Kong has long been a transient place. Right from the start it has been a trading hub and a link to China where people come and go with their bounties. Although the size of the ships in Victoria Harbour has changed over the years and trading now takes place in the high-tech trading floors of the banks that have settled here, life in **Hong Kong still involves a constantly revolving door of people** and families



entering and exiting the city. Some people make Hong Kong their home for the briefest of periods whereas others settle down and never leave, with the majority falling somewhere in between.

This transient nature is reflected in our club's culture which **welcomes new members and offers a place of stability** in the midst of the craziness that is Hong Kong.

# Introduction

## 1.1 Who Are SCDC?

The South China Diving Club has a 40-year track record of uniting longstanding and new members, and helping to create a sense of belonging, like **a second family for many**, in Hong Kong.

And then there are the farewells, which are celebrated in the style that only fellow divers can relate to - with **boats, bubbles, banter, joy and laughter** tinged with sadness at the impending departure of a close buddy. But there's always a silver lining, because family members never truly leave and our alumni continue to spread the BSAC ethos in their new stomping grounds, be it in Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Australia, or the Isle of Mull to name just a few!

Family is a common phrase used to describe our club, and the **friendships formed mean a lot to our members**, as you'll soon read about. But the club also addresses a bigger challenge: to bridge the many different cultures within the city through a common interest and passion for scuba diving. The continued input from our founding members

(more about them later!) helps newer members develop a different perspective on the city. This micro melting pot of cultures is a great asset to the club, and helps to further the reach of BSAC well beyond its home shores.

In addition to the obvious common interest of diving, there are **core values that run deep** within the South China Diving Club that include an unwavering commitment to safety and doing our bit for the environment. In Asia, we're lucky enough to have some of the world's most beautiful diving available to us.



# Introduction

## 1.1 Who Are SCDC?

But sadly we also witness the darker side of the region, from the dubious diving safety practises exhibited in some of the less-developed countries we visit to the direct impact of pollution and global warming on sea life throughout the Pacific.

Our members take on this challenge and are passionate about **leading by example** to others in the community as evidenced through the hands-on rescue and first aid courses, environmental conservation talks, and beach clean-ups arranged by the club.

Perhaps the most fitting summary is to simply share our club vision and mission statements which are ingrained in everything we do and used to share with the wider community everything that the South China Diving Club stands for:

### **Vision**

Inspiring divers to explore and protect our ocean.

### **Mission**

To promote scuba diving in Hong Kong through diver development, social events and a commitment to fun, safety and environmental awareness.



# Introduction

## 1.2 Club History

SCDC was founded in 1979 by a group of avid divers who needed to find a way to dive regularly in Hong Kong waters despite the limited resources available locally. Established as an overseas branch of the British Sub-Aqua Club, SCDC quickly built a community of divers dedicated to excellence and the importance of training for safe diving. SCDC continues to offer ongoing BSAC training from novice to advanced divers and maintaining the latest safety and diving approaches and techniques.

As a social as well as a diving club, we try to find any opportunity to celebrate something.

- We celebrated the **Last Dive of the Empire 1997** to mark the handover of Hong Kong from the United Kingdom back to the People's Republic of China on July 1st, 1997.
- In 2004 we celebrated the **Club's Silver Jubilee (25 years of diving in Hong Kong)** with a series of dives, parties, and overseas expeditions.

- In 2013 we celebrated the **50th anniversary of BSAC** by having 50 divers dive 50 minutes each.
- And **every May 24th we celebrate the club's birthday** and another great year of diving in Hong Kong!

So we're very pleased to be celebrating our **40th anniversary** in 2019. We've come a long way from being a club that originally catered mostly to civil service expats to what it is today: a totally international club with a huge diversity of backgrounds. Throughout this document, we've attempted to capture a picture of the South China Diving Club as it is now in order to share it with you.

And to our founding members and alumni, we do hope you see the same core club attitudes presented here as they were when you were a member!

# Introduction

## 1.3 Document Development

Pulling together a document of this size and magnitude is no small task. In fact, due to the size and complexity of the job, this is the third attempt by the club to submit an application for the Heinke Trophy. The previous two attempts simply proved to be too daunting. But in honour of our 40th anniversary year, we were determined to get this project done. At the very least, it allows us to put together a historical record of the club, something many of us felt was long overdue.

Two project managers were assigned to oversee the compilation: Maddy Prout looked after the content and Andy Niven the design and layout. From the start we recognised that we would need input from many people, past and present, especially with the images. So Rob Christie was appointed master of photography to lead us through this challenge.

Each section was assigned to a writer, who took on the task of conducting their own research and preparing the base text for the section. In all, there were 15 members who provided the primary research and writing.

And we learnt a lot in the process. We were delighted to have such quick and positive feedback from our former members. They shared their memories with us and told us about historical events in the club that were completely new to us!



# Introduction

## 1.3 Document Development

Once the text for the articles was written, we had the fun job of editing and image selection ahead of us. Not a small task as many of our contributors are not native English speakers, and those who are don't necessarily exhibit writing as a core skill! So, we did our best and did an editing job that was honest to the author and their particular style while also ensuring that the message was clear.

Putting together this document has been a fantastic experience for the club. Everyone has discovered all sorts of information they had no previous idea about and we realised that there are many more stories to tell that should be written down and told. In the meantime, we are pleased that this part of the journey is complete and we are very grateful for all of the support that our members and alumni have given us over the last few months.



### Contributors

Paul Bayne

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Catherine Chu

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Julie Reakes

Trevor Richmond

Chris Roberts

Jo Roberts

Wayne Robinson

Jo Ruxton

Stuart Sharpless

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WH Tam

Andrew Waller

*And many more!*

### Editors

Rob Christie

Chris Dillon

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Andy Niven

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# Membership

2.1 Membership Overview

2.2 The Old Guard and the New Guard

2.3 The Joining Process

2.4 Club Administration

2.5 Club Communication

2.6 Promotion



# Membership

## 2.1 Membership Overview

The geographic location as well as the nature of Hong Kong as a very metropolitan city with many people of different nationalities living here, with or without their loved ones, means we have a **very international membership portfolio** that we are very proud of. Such diversity brings about an exciting mix of cultures, characters, experiences and backgrounds surely making our club stand out from many others.

We **currently have 60 BSAC memberships**. The oldest member joined in 1988 and the most recent member joined in September 2018. Our members come from all over the world and are **between the ages of 19 and 69**. Amongst these we have 3 members with a lifetime membership (they probably can't do without the club!). The remaining members subscribe annually.

Occasionally, members move back to their home country or to other countries due to work requirements or for other reasons. The big ocean between Hong Kong and where they live now, however, can't stop us staying in touch. After all, the big blue is what connects us divers, isn't it?



### **“International Club? 18 Countries Represented!”**

When passing by Hong Kong, many of them take the time to meet us for a catch-up on one of our club evenings, special dinners for these VIPs or to even join us for dives on the weekend. These moments are particularly special for us as we can share lots of memories together. Of course, many of us won't miss an opportunity either to catch-up with our club mates where they now live, should we travel overseas.

# Membership

## 2.1 Membership Overview

Of course, training qualifications are another a big and important topic. Since last year the number of the club's instructor qualifications has dramatically increased after a very successful BSAC instructor training, conducted by two excellent National Instructors, Dave and Andy, who travelled all the way from the UK to Hong Kong to teach these students.

This means over **50% of the members of our club have an Assistant to Advanced Instructor Status.**

At the same time, with regular training being conducted, the current diver training numbers and diver qualifications are spread over the different levels. This shows that our members not only enjoy doing one course, but are eager to expand their diving skills.

### *Instructors*

*5 Assistant Instructors*

*1 Assistant Open Water Instructor*

*20 Open Water Instructors*

*7 Advanced Instructors*

*14 Students currently training*

### *Diving Qualifications*

*1 Ocean Diver, 9 Sports Divers, 14 Dive Leaders*

*8 Advanced Divers, 2 First Class Divers*

*3 Ocean Diver equivalent qualification*

*3 Sports Diver equivalent qualification*

*6 Dive Leader equivalent qualifications*

# Membership

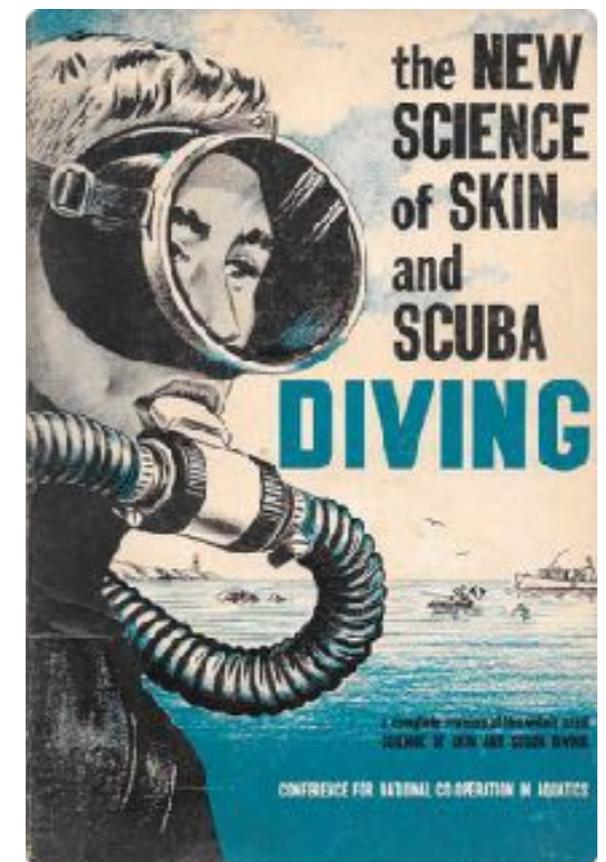
## 2.2 The Old Guard and the New Guard

On May 24th, 1979, SCDC held its first committee meeting. On the agenda were typical items, such as pool hire arrangements, compressor maintenance fees, boat hire and fees, and current membership numbers. In many ways, the topics that were covered during that first meeting are much the same as those that are covered during a committee meeting in 2019.

But much has changed over the years, and SCDC has had to move with the times. In particular, scuba diving has seen significant changes with equipment which is now safer and generally more accessible. Regulators are designed with alternative air source (AAS) 'octopus' style secondary stages which are easier to use in emergency situations. Common use of delayed surface marker buoys (DSMBs) help identify diver locations and prevent surface collisions. Dive computers accurately track tissue saturation and calculate decompression in real time. As all of this new technology and equipment was introduced, SCDC needed to adapt by modifying training programs and our diving

operations in order to accommodate and make best use of them.

Boats have also changed over the years. It has been a significant challenge for the club to find boats to support our diving operations. In the early days of the club, it was common to use a large 'junk' style boat, which is made of wood and designed for slow pleasure cruising.



# Membership

## *2.2 The Old Guard and the New Guard*

However, these types of boats are costly to maintain and have been slowly disappearing from Hong Kong. When two of our favourite boats were then wrecked during large typhoons, the club was suddenly challenged to find new boats that could replace them and accommodate our weekly diving schedule. Then a large influx of tourists from mainland China in the early 2000s drove up demand for pleasure cruising and the rental costs for boats soared. But each time there was a change the club adapted, found new boat operators, started using smaller boats that were more cost effective, and made connections with private boat owners who enjoyed diving and wanted to support our dive activities.

As a consequence of these challenges, the club has been pushed to explore and adapt its diving operations. Diving locations that may have not been considered before due to restrictions such as distance or hazardous water access, were available to the smaller and faster boats that we were hiring. We were also pushed to find more land-based diving options, which is surprisingly limited in Hong Kong. But



through members' connections, we obtained access to private waterfront land. We also started to rely on local boat captains who were more familiar with undocumented reefs, wrecks and pinnacles and were willing to point them out to us for exploration.

All of these challenges pushed the club to diversify more over the years in order to attract knowledge and talent that could help us embed deeper into the local and regional diving community.

# Membership

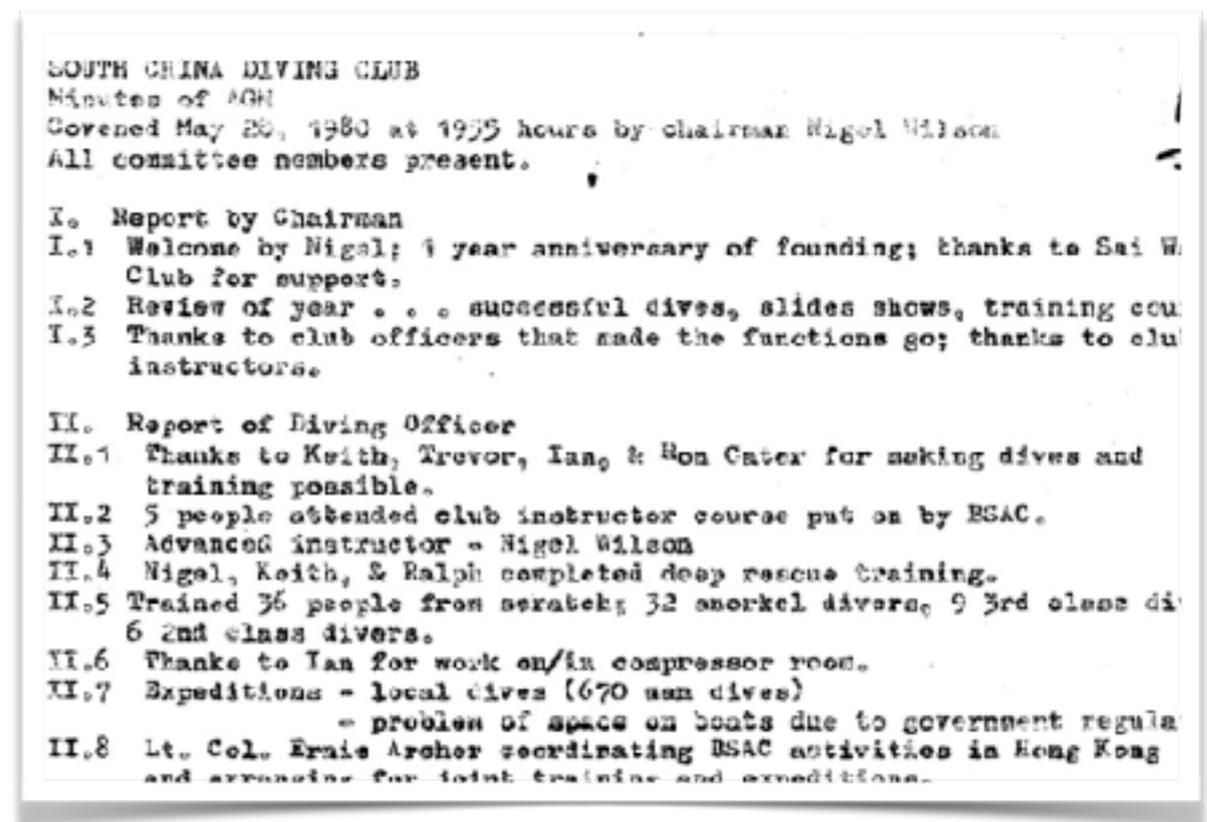
## 2.2 The Old Guard and the New Guard

In the early years, SCDC was generally perceived as an expat club (a perception that was reinforced through its association with BSAC). But efforts were made to attract local members, become a multicultural and multilingual club, and to reinforce awareness that, while BSAC offers a set of diving standards that underpins the diving operations of the club, our social make-up is uniquely cosmopolitan.

Today's club membership is a wonderful mix of nationalities and cultures, with a strong presence from local Hong Kong Chinese joined with people from Europe, North America as well as other countries across Asia. Although we share English as a common language, Cantonese, Mandarin, Japanese, Tagalog, Malay, German, Italian and French are just some of the other languages that are commonly spoken by our members in the club.

What was not discussed at that first committee meeting (which has become increasingly prominent today) is the social side of the club. More than just a facilitator of diving, SCDC developed into a social club that is organised around

the sport of diving. In fact, the social aspect of the club has been so strong over the years that the club introduced a non-diving membership status just for people who enjoy the friendship of the diving community and want to be a part of it despite not being divers themselves. As a result, a large part of the committee meeting today is dedicated to discussing the many events that happen around our diving activities.



# Membership

## 2.2 The Old Guard and the New Guard

Thanks to our close partnership with the Aberdeen Boat Club, Thursday evening talks and presentations are a regular occurrence these days, a perk of having a stable venue to meet. Presentations from organisations such as the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), renowned ocean conservationists, professional photographers and videographers, dive equipment developers and vendors, and of course our own members, have made our Thursday evening social events interesting and inspiring for our members and the rest of the local diving community alike.

The success of the club has been driven from the start by that enthusiasm, passion and devotion to all things diving, which is only reinforced by each activity, event and dive expedition that is organised. Our members have always been engaged in environmental conservation and care of marine life. Campaigns to push local companies and corporations to remove shark fin soup from menus have been successful and continue to be a battle that is fought by today's members. Our passion and interest in history has

led many of our members to obtain certification with the Nautical Archeology Society which allows them to excavate sites where historical artefacts may be found and reported. And our love of sharing the sport with everyone, especially those who are physically challenged, has kept our partnership with the International Association of Hand-in-Hand Divers a valuable and cherished experience for our members.



漁農自然護理署  
Agriculture, Fisheries and  
Conservation Department



Nautical  
Archeology  
Society

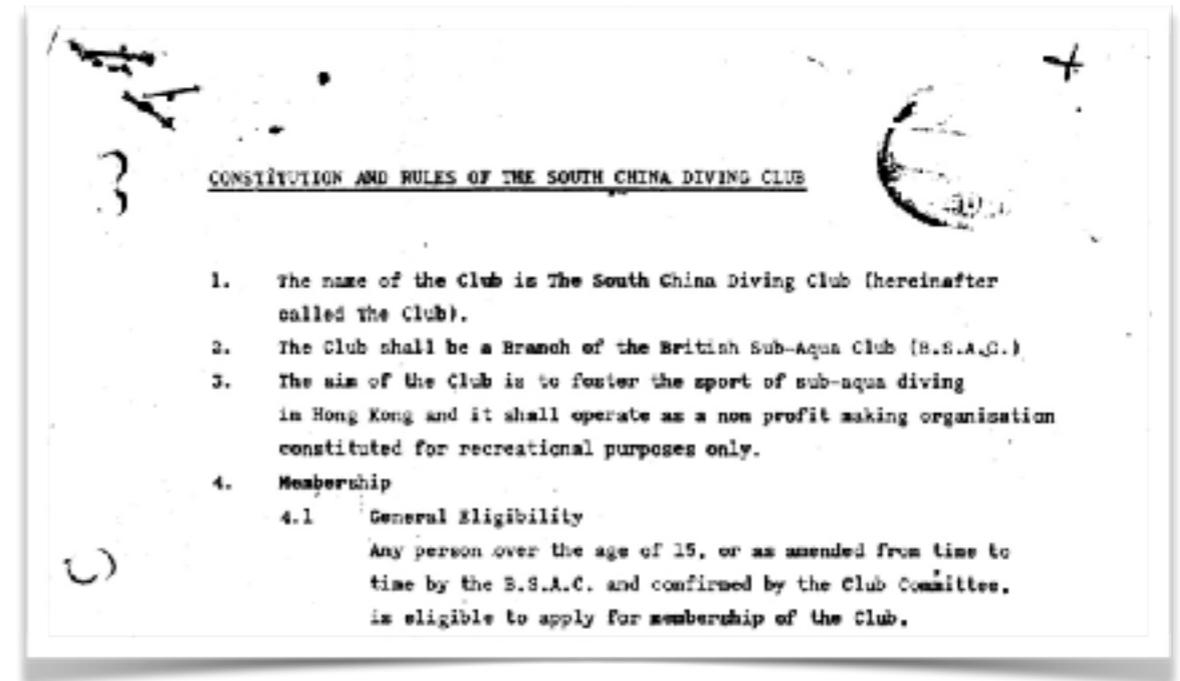


# Membership

## 2.2 The Old Guard and the New Guard

But no retrospective of the club would be complete without mentioning two aspects that have not changed over the years, and are frequently cited by current and former members as being central to their club experience. Not only are the Thursday nights social events legendary and a staple of the club, but it's the annual dive camp that leaves the most lasting impression and memories on our members. During these weekend-long events, the club spends two days camped out on a remote outer island with tents, BBQ equipment and dive gear. Nobody is quite sure how it started, but a theme is always selected for dive camp that requires all attendees to wear costumes to fit the theme. It would be fair to say that 'what happens on dive camp, stays on dive camp'! But dive camp is also the source of many of the club's greatest stories and legends, and continues to be an unpredictable, exciting, and joyous event that endures for many years.

The other aspect of the club that has changed little since its founding is our membership fee. The original subscription



fee was \$100 per month. Today, that fee has risen only to \$130 per month, which means that despite all of the financial challenges with costs (especially boats) to manage over the years, the club has kept its fees for its members stable and consistent. Some hard decisions were made over the years that helped keep costs down, but the club never sacrificed its safety equipment, quality of training, and availability and frequency of dive expeditions for the sake of cost-cutting.

# Membership

## 2.2 The Old Guard and the New Guard

We did, however, sell off our compressor and tanks, which were very expensive to maintain, and no longer rent a room just for equipment storage. But hiring tanks in 2019 is not the same as it was in 1979, as commercial operators now support a large community of divers in Hong Kong, unlike 40 years ago when very few people were diving here.

And as we did 40 years ago, we toast and drink a beer after every dive and every Thursday evening. Without a doubt, any member of SCDC from 1979 would easily recognise the friendship, camaraderie, good humour and passion that is as much a part of the club today as when it was when it was founded. The only noticeable difference is that instead of meeting in an empty sports stadium in the darkness of night, our members enjoy the comfort of the Aberdeen Boat Club on Thursday nights which has been a tradition for over 20 years. We are so fortunate to have such a long history that current and former members continue to share with each other in Hong Kong and across the world. And as we know from speaking to our newest and oldest member, that welcome and warmth is what made SCDC special on that very first day.

“ The thing I appreciated most about SCDC was the welcome that I received on joining. ”  
Les Dobson (1995-2005)

“ It became my social life in Hong Kong. The masses of good friends I made who are now spread all over the world. ”  
Neil Hambleton (1992-2010)

“ It is the friendly and open environment of the people that makes it so much more enjoyable, both on the boats and in the bar afterwards and on Thursday nights. ”  
Simon Chivers (joined 2017)

“ For me there is nothing better than SCDC and there never will be. ”  
Jo Roberts (2012-2018)

“ It was such a melting pot of members who had different levels of diving but everyone would always be happy to give advice, support and share knowledge. ”  
Vicki Elliott (2003-2012)

“ Completely out of my expectations. Never thought that would be such an active club with weekly meetings and so much dives. ”  
Jordi Lopez Martin (joined 2018)

“ One of the great things about SCDC, is the many people always willing to help and develop your skills as a diver. ”  
Stuart Sharpless (joined 2016)

# Membership

## 2.3 The Joining Process

There are many ways to join our club, either because you want to start diving or are already a diver and you chat to your friend, colleague or maybe a friend of a friend of an existing club member who will then happily invite you to join them to one of the club's social evenings. Another way could be that you found us through the world wide web via our always up-to-date website or Facebook page.

You've found us. The next step is to attend one of our club evenings. We are all a very social bunch of people and often enjoy a few drinks, chats, loads of banter, a good curry and maybe a few more drinks together. If you ask some of the club members, they'll tell you that this is the most exciting evening they look forward to in a week!

On these club evenings, we also sometimes host special events, such as trainings or talks/presentations about various topics including marine life, conservation projects, marine archeology as well as dive expeditions by club

members. Every interested diver or potential diver, or even those who don't intend to dive at any stage but are interested in any of such talks or presentations can be assured of a warm welcome. The more the merrier! They will be showered with great stories by our members, who are always happy to share their experience and advice.



# Membership

## 2.3 The Joining Process

Most importantly as a follow up to this, they will be invited to join one of our next weekend club dive days, after which it is almost set in stone that they WILL sign up with us, as our club dives are not only about the diving, but about high safety and loads of fun as well! They will be immediately included in our group and guided from the time they sign up for the dive. While on the boat they can always count on many helping hands if they have questions or if they have equipment trouble.

When it comes to the actual dive they can be sure to be paired up with a suitably experienced buddy to ensure they will plunge into an enjoyable dive - often their first experience in Hong Kong waters.

Once they express their wish to join the club, they will then be guided through the signing-on process formalities with BSAC and the SCDC branch. And there you have it, a new SCDC member is born!



# Membership

## 2.4 Club Administration

### New Club Branding

In the summer of 2018, we formed a working group—comprising Christopher Dillon, Alex Grioni, Andy Niven, Maddy Prout, Christopher Roberts, and W.H. Tam—to update SCDC’s branding, which the committee felt was outdated and did not explain the club’s purpose and activities. Our goal was to have everything ready and in place to launch the new identity in time for our 40th anniversary celebrations in May 2019.

The first step was to create new vision and mission statements. The group brainstormed a list of words that describe the current SCDC ethos and should be reflected in the club’s branding. Over several meetings, the brainstormed words were debated and refined to eliminate words that overlapped—like “conservation”, “environmental”, and “sustainable”— to produce and test a series of statements.



During the September 2018 committee meeting the group agreed on the following statements :

#### **Vision**

*Inspiring divers to explore and protect our ocean.*

#### **Mission**

*To promote scuba diving in Hong Kong through diver development, social events and a commitment to fun, safety and environmental awareness.*

# Membership

## 2.4 Club Administration

As part of this exercise, we reviewed the use of Chinese in our branding and communications. This is a complex issue. Cantonese is the most commonly used language in Hong Kong, we have many Cantonese-speaking divers and we arrange a variety of activities and events to increase our membership. However, we have a limited number of Cantonese-speaking instructors, our training materials are in English and our club operates mainly in English. While members must be able to speak English, our club is committed to being open and welcoming to anyone who shares our values, so including Chinese in our branding was important to us.

Ultimately, we incorporated Chinese in our new logo (see below) and created a Chinese landing page for the website [<https://www.scdc.org.hk/membership-chi>]. We also translated the mission and vision statements into Chinese.

When the statements had been endorsed by the committee, we began work on the new logo. We compiled a detailed creative brief based on the information gathered and

decisions made while writing the statements. We searched for a graphic artist to turn our ideas into a logo that was distinctive, avoided cliches, and worked in many different applications: from business cards to banners and from t-shirts to our website. And all of this was to be done on a shoestring.

After a couple of false starts we found a local designer who delivered the new logo shown below. This logo was substantially completed by the end of 2018, fine tuned during early 2019, and finally signed off during the February 2019 committee meeting.

### The Evolution of the SCDC Logo...



*Early days...*



*A new millennium...*



*40th Anniversary!*

# Membership

## 2.4 Club Administration

### New Membership Management

After years of managing the club's membership by hand, the committee decided to follow BSAC's lead and invest in a web platform that would handle more of our operations and activities, including payments and events.

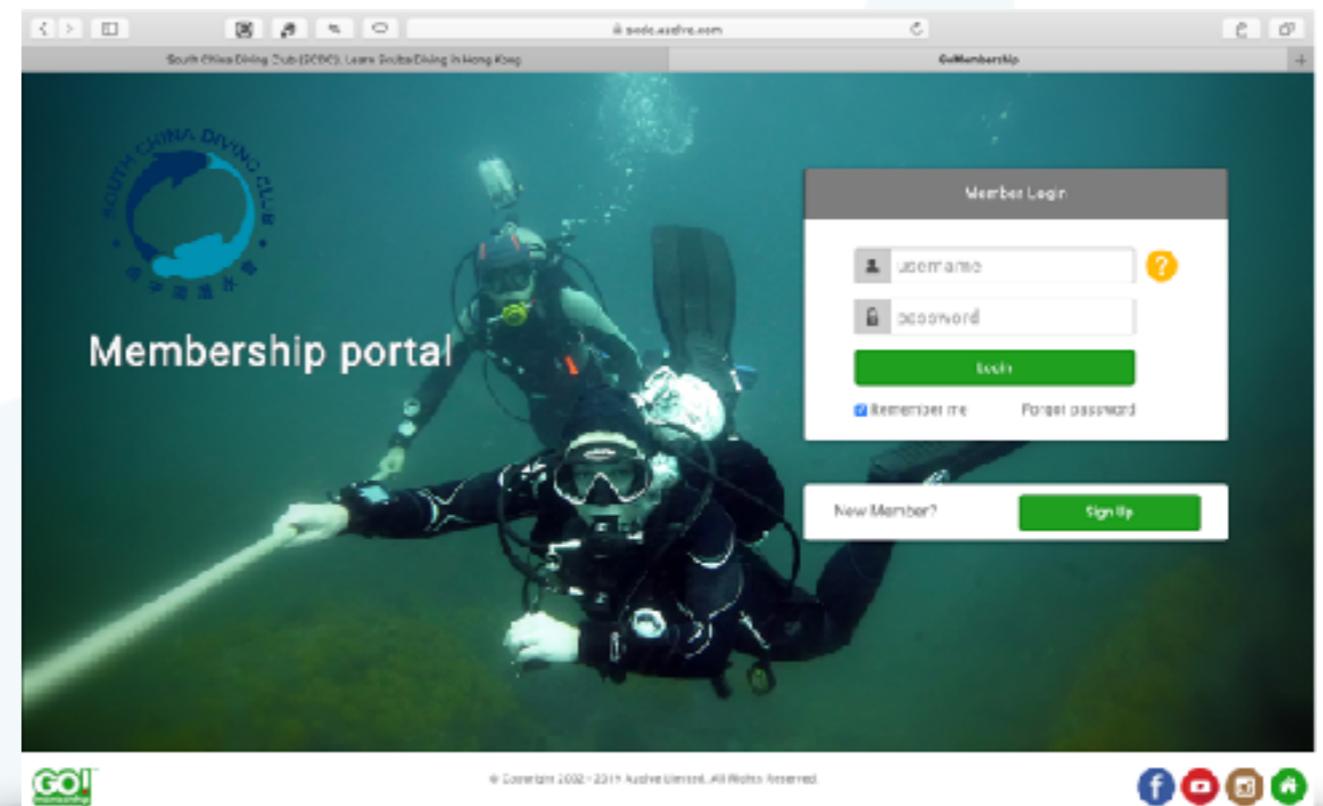
A British company, Azolve, was contracted to build a system using one of their templates. The process of deciding which functions we wanted was long, but the implementation—which was completed in 2018—was quick and efficient.

Azolve's system gives each member a web-based account, which lists their personal and emergency contact information. The system lets members complete and submit a medical form, which is based on the BSAC form, select a membership type and pay their annual club dues.

Through their account, members can access a variety of useful information, such as club procedures, emergency phone numbers, statutory documents and boat-management policies.

Finally, the account lets members sign up to and pay for dives, training programmes and social events.

The new system keeps our membership information tidy, current and centralised. It reduces the time needed to administer the club's activities and gives our divers an easy, convenient way to manage their membership.



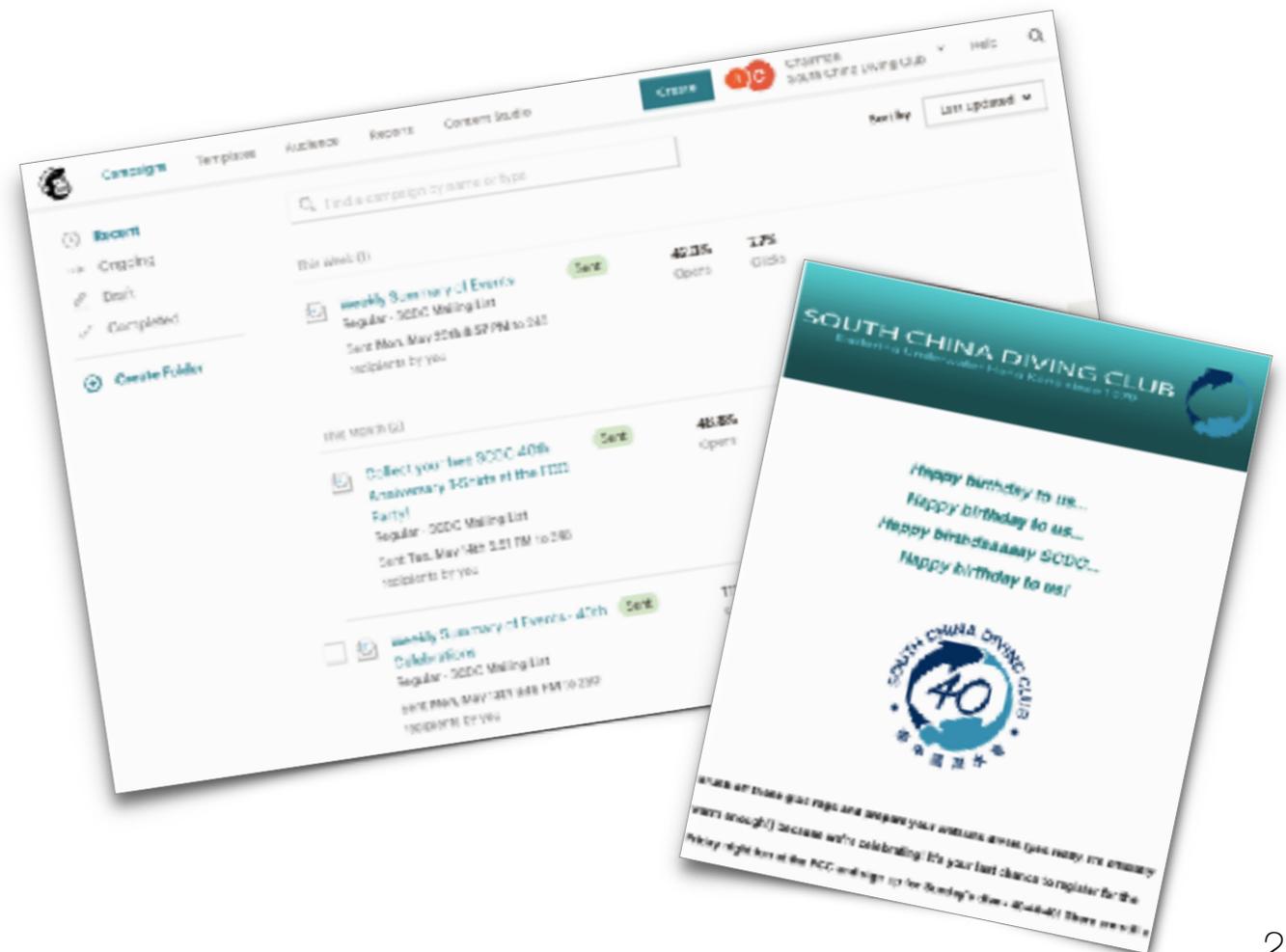
# Membership

## 2.5 Club Communications

Despite being the chatty bunch we are (just ask the lovely bar staff that take care of us on our Thursday club social nights!), conversation alone doesn't quite cut it with such a wide and disparate membership. And being environmentally conscious, we've tried to do away with as much paper as possible, **fully embracing the electronic world we live in** and utilising a wide range of media for getting the word out there to our members.

One of the key methods of keeping everyone up-to-date with the latest goings-on at SCDC is our **weekly email newsletter**. This is sent to all members and friends that have opted to stay in touch with the club and currently has 255 subscribers. **It's short, sharp and to the point**, with only a little sarcasm and teasing thrown in for good measure. Every Monday we advertise the next dive trip, special talks and events, club outings, membership updates and any other interesting tidbits of information we think our members might find interesting - or at least relevant - you can never please them all!

We use an online platform called MailChimp to create and manage our email campaigns which provides **detailed analysis of the delivery, open rates and clicks generated** from each email. Importantly, MailChimp also ensures all member data is handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and electronic marketing best practices, such as providing the option to unsubscribe from future emails (ok, ok, stop yawning!).



# Membership

## 2.5 Club Communications

A recent addition to our communications armoury has been the introduction of **club WhatsApp groups**. The main one being the SCDC Members group, used to provide instant updates and reminders about events, dive trips and everything else. Initially created in 2018, **the group has taken on a life of its own** and is now used by members to share a wealth of information ranging from diving-related humour, photos, equipment offers and order sharing, environmental updates to requests for advice and recommendations.

What's really great is that the WhatsApp group facilitates instant two-way communication and helps **foster a sense of community** even through a mobile phone. Interestingly it's being widely used by our overseas members to keep in touch with the club and share updates from their part of the world.

The success of this group has led to the formation of **subgroups to ensure more targeted communications** and avoid spamming the wider community. Currently we are

actively using subgroups for the committee, instructors and assistant instructors, dive leaders, course groups and even a videography group.

Our **club website, [www.scdc.org.hk](http://www.scdc.org.hk), is another important part of our communications strategy** for both members and the general public. In 2018, our webmaster, Alex Grioni, put an immense amount of hard work into revamping the site, adding new sections and ensuring the website is current, informative and conveys the spirit of the club. It is bilingual, with pages in both English and Cantonese, providing information about who we are as a club, details of the training available, a calendar of events, a photo gallery, our club blog as well as how to get in touch.



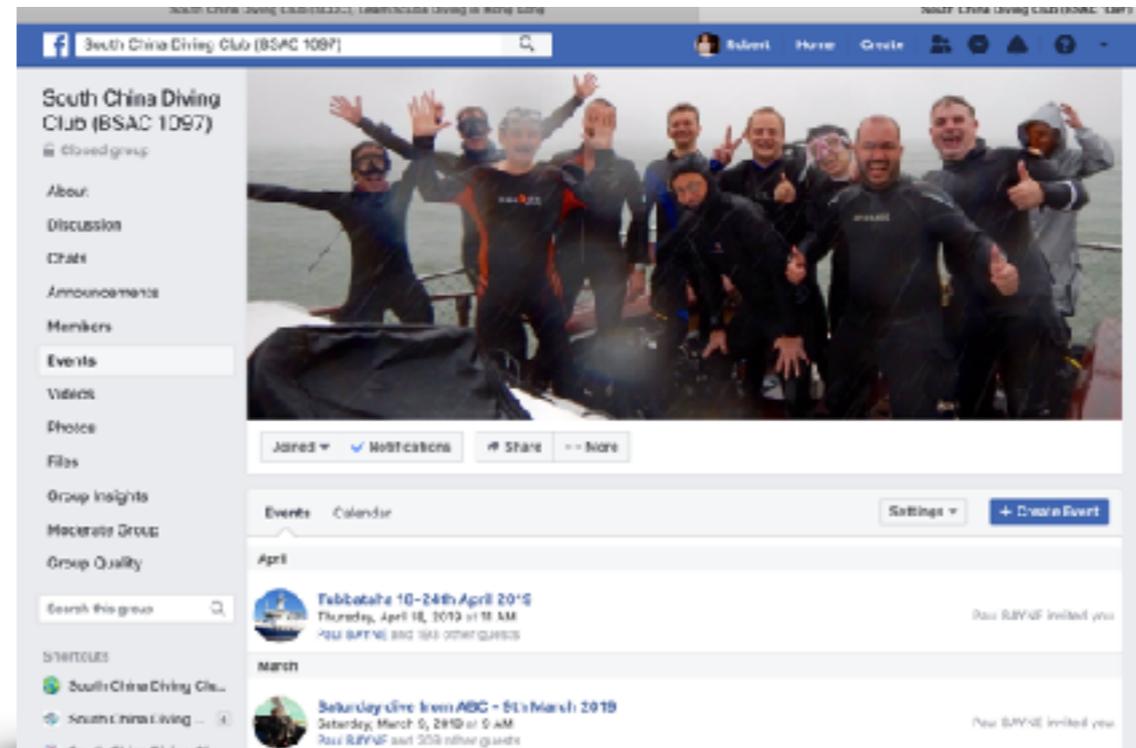
# Membership

## 2.5 Club Communications

The new **portal for current SCDC members**, is now the go-to place for managing important documents, such as our official club policies and individuals' medical statements, keeping current certification levels up to date as well as making the annual subscription and membership fee payments. This was adopted by all members in 2018 and, as you've already heard, has greatly improved the efficiency of our club administration.

Finally, what modern-day communications strategy would be complete without a mention of the social media giant, Facebook? Our **Facebook group, South China Diving Club (BSAC 1097)**, is used extensively by members to share information about environmental issues, club socials and updates from our regular dive trips. We share links to our website's photo gallery and blog to help drive traffic to the site and ensure that people see what diving with us is all about. The group is open to everyone although the committee vets the requests to join the group to ensure it is not used by unscrupulous Facebook users or companies merely wishing to sell their wares.

The move to expand the methods of communication with members - in particular the launch of the members' WhatsApp group, the revamped website and interactive Facebook group, transformed our style of communication in 2018. We are no longer merely broadcasting messages from the committee to members but instead have an **interactive, two-way information flow that is owned and used by all members**, near and far.



# Membership

## 2.6 Promotion

Reaching potential new members is key for any club and it's especially important for SCDC, being located in one of the most transient cities in the world. The nature of life in Hong Kong means that even our most committed members sometimes have to leave. So we're always looking for new faces to join our ranks through various means.

First and foremost is word of mouth. Our members are an enthusiastic and passionate bunch and will often **attract new members simply through talking about what we get up to** at weekends. Many new members come along for the first time with colleagues or friends already in the club or are enticed through encounters with our members on other dive boats both in Hong Kong and further afield. Often they sign up as a result of that experience.

**We try to let our activities speak for themselves.** Club diving isn't necessarily for everyone, and it's very different from diving with a commercial dive shop in Asia. Promoting membership through word of mouth ensures this is understood by new members, expectations are set and everyone is happy. There's a lot to gain from club diving but

it's important that new members understand that it's not a one-way street.



Another very effective form of club promotion is our website and club inbox. Many membership enquiries reach us through the website and we always invite potential new joiners down to meet us at our weekly club nights. It's a great tool, and **the gallery and blog seem to be the most valuable tool in attracting divers.** Several members commented that they had no idea that they could join a club that dives so frequently before finding our website on Google.

The Facebook group also plays a similar role in generating interest but even there, we direct enquiries through the club website.

# Membership

## 2.6 Promotion

Most of our new members are already qualified divers, usually from other organisations such as PADI or SSI. Typically they join the club after learning to dive while on holiday elsewhere in Asia and finding they want to keep practising upon their return to Hong Kong. This works well because of our location and challenges of Hong Kong diving but in 2018 we made a special effort to run a **Try Dive programme**, driven in part by the need to help our many new Instructors and Assistant Instructors gain experience of teaching complete beginners. The Try Dives were advertised via the website, email, Facebook and word of mouth and directly resulted in the club running an Ocean Diver course for three new members over the summer.

Finally, another method of promotion that we've really capitalised on over the last year is the local media. We've had several **articles published by local newspapers and magazines, promoting both SCDC and diving in Hong Kong** in general. There's more about this in later sections, so we'll keep you in suspense about this for just a little while longer.



# Diver Training

3.1 The SCDC Approach to Training

3.2 Instructor Training

3.3 Equipment



# Diver Training

## 3.1 The SCDC Approach to Training

It's estimated that Hong Kong has 70,000 qualified divers living in the territory. Most are PADI trained, but we take great pride in offering the BSAC syllabus as an alternative. We follow the BSAC ethos of providing training courses that allow **divers at all levels to progress at their own pace** and comfort level into becoming well-rounded and knowledgeable divers. We constantly find that divers who switch over from other training agencies immediately see the benefits of training with a club where there's **a higher level of diving independence and safety awareness**.

The BSAC syllabus has enabled our members to progress from Ocean Divers through to Dive Leaders and on to various instructor levels and then contribute back to the club by developing new members' skills, abilities and approaches. We recognise that divers join our club because the membership fees partially subsidise the cost of their training, while instructors give their time free of charge. We're fortunate to have **access to great facilities for both theory and practical lessons**. Training sessions are held at members' workplaces, in the Aberdeen Boat Club's meeting rooms and at a nearby university's open-air pools.

We also have good relationships with local dive shops, dive schools and universities, which provide us access to dive boats, training facilities and more.

Throughout 2018, we ran regular pool nights on the third Thursday of each month. This provided any member, regardless of whether or not they were taking a course, with the **opportunity to brush up on their skills or try out new gear in a safe environment**. These sessions proved popular and in 2019 we'll be increasing their frequency.

There are also a few shore-based sites for dive training, the most interesting being an old concrete ramp, which was blown up by the British army before they left Hong Kong. The ramp, which was used to smuggle illegal goods into China, is now known as Artillery Ramp.

It provides safe and easy access for divers and the surrounding area is ideal for developing basic skills. Our open water training usually occurs during our regular weekend dive boat trips. This allows fun divers to enjoy their dives while others are under the supervision of instructors.

# Diver Training

## *3.1 The SCDC Approach to Training*

### **Instructor Foundation & Open Water Instructor Courses**

One of the club's biggest achievements in 2018 was the successful completion of an Instructor Foundation Course (IFC) and an Open Water Instructor Course (OWIC) followed by the Open Water Instructor Exam (OWIE). As the Training Officer, it was fantastic to see instructor students who we'd trained locally as Sports Divers then Dive Leaders to work so hard and with enormous determination and dedication. They ran the gamut of a very intense series of instructor courses and exams and all our students passed!

It was an exciting time for the club and there's more on this later!

### **Ocean Diver, Sport Diver & Dive Leader Courses**

As a club located in Asia, it's pretty normal for us to attract new members who are already qualified divers and as such we don't have a huge need to run Ocean Diver courses.

However, following our successful Try Dive session we had potential divers and decided to start an Ocean Diver course in August for a group of new members. This provided a great opportunity for our brand new instructors and those completing their IFC courses to put their recent training skills and qualifications to good use. Throughout the course, the experienced instructors were on hand to provide support to the newly qualified instructors and trainees. This resulted in the everyone passing within two months of starting the course.



# Diver Training

## 3.1 The SCDC Approach to Training

We partnered our newly signed off Ocean Divers with a group of PADI and NAUI divers to go through a Sports Diver course during Autumn 2018. At the same time, we also started a Dive Leader course for a batch of Sports Diver students who had finished their course earlier in the year. Currently we have 10 Dive Leader students who are close to completing their courses.

### Skill Development Courses

The club often does skill development courses (SDC) and invites members who are experts in their fields to provide additional relevant training. Popular courses include trim & buoyancy and first aid. We have in the past run Sports Mixed Gas courses on trips to the Philippines where we can plan for deep dives, and also boat handling courses in Hong Kong. With the heavy load of teaching foundation courses in 2018, we had less time to provide SDCs to our members. However, two of our members found innovative ways of teaching first aid and another member, who has various commercial interests in the dive industry, came in to provide instruction in servicing of Apeks regulators.



# Diver Training

## 3.1 The SCDC Approach to Training

### First Aid

For the first aid course, club member Stuart Sharpless, who runs his own outdoor educational business and is an experienced wilderness instructor trainer, provided the venue, casualties and props to frighten the students into action. After a very brief rundown on dealing with a first aid incident, students in were paired up and taken to different rooms where they were confronted with (fake) blood and various casualties. The scenarios were made to be as realistic as possible by actors while the students were given a time limit to work out how to deal with them. After the first round, students were given a more comprehensive lesson on dealing with casualties before being let loose again. It proved to be an eye-opener and gave participants more confidence to effectively deal with a first aid incident.



### Regulator Servicing

For the regulator service course, club member Danny Kwok gave an excellent instruction class and support to 19 participants on how to service Apeks regulators. We had the advantage of using the science labs in a secondary school where Danny demonstrated a step-by-step approach towards completely overhauling a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> stage regulator before each participant serviced their own regulators under his watchful eye. Suffice to say it took a whole day to ensure all the members successfully completed the servicing and testing of their regulators.

# Diver Training

## 3.1 The SCDC Approach to Training

### Summary of 2018 Training Activities

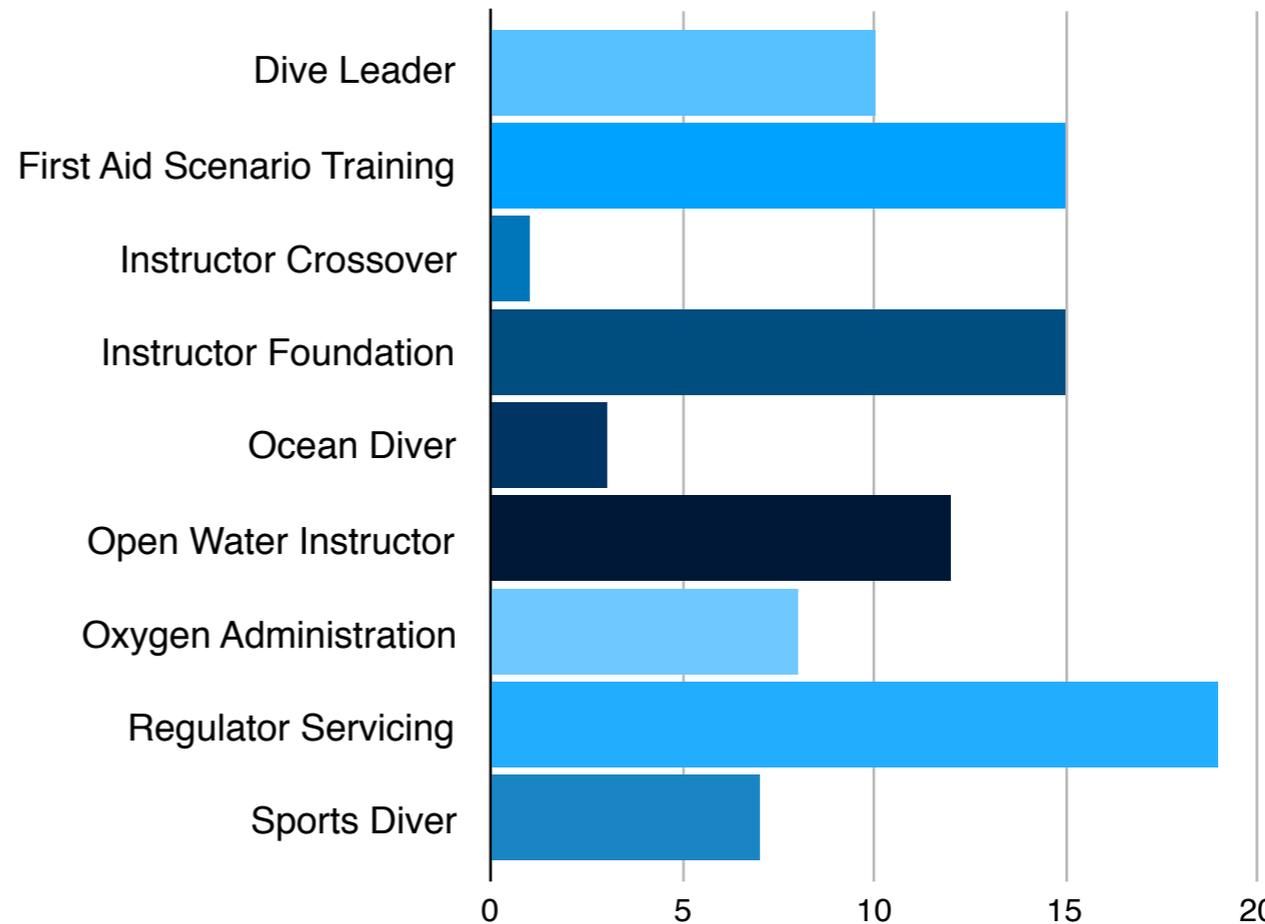
**89** Active Course Participants

**27** Instructor/Assistant Instructor Qualifications

**11** New Open Water Instructors

**5** New Assistant Instructors

Number of 2018 Course Participants



# Diver Training

## 3.2 Instructor Training

It was Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2018. Not one, but two National Instructors, Dave Lucas and Andy Jarvis, were greeted by the sight of an inflated orange DSMB as they came out of the baggage reclaim hall at Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok International Airport. It seemed a very apposite way of attracting their attention and directing them to Andy Carter, their SCDC-provided chauffeur for the journey back into the city. The club's Training Officer, Mike Belshaw, had graciously vacated his apartment, complete with concealed diving equipment room and a fridge full of beer, and offered it to the visiting NIs as their base of operations for their week-and-a-half sojourn in the fragrant harbour.

Owing to the club being so distant from the UK, running instructor training is necessarily somewhat infrequent. The previous occasion had been seven years before, and since then there had been many members training to the level of Dive Leader who were eager to progress further. In addition, to several Sports Divers wanting to take advantage of the opportunity to participate in the Instructor Foundation Course.



The Training Officer, Mike, put together a team of the club's existing instructors and arranged with BSAC to run a back-to-back Instructor Foundation Course, Open Water Instructor Course, and the two Instructor Exams.

And so it was that there were 16 candidates for the IFC, of whom 11 went on to do the OWIC, including one PADI crossover, and 10 the practical and theory exams; hence why BSAC had dispatched a pair of NIs to manage the sheer volume of talent. Surely this must be some kind of record?!

# Diver Training

## 3.2 Instructor Training

SCDC is lucky to have Stuart Sharpless as one of its members. Stuart is a director of Asia Pacific Adventures and generously allowed the NIs, local support team, and students to use the company's shop lecture facilities for the classroom training. This got underway first thing the following morning, with two local Instructor Trainers, Paul Bayne and Andy Niven, supporting the NIs in delivering the IFC lectures. By the time the day was done, it was evident that the local lads had been swatting up on their PAVE delivery given the very noticeable and entertaining visual aids!

Dave and Andy were out in Hong Kong for only 10 days, within which the IFC, the OWIC, and the PIE and TIE had to be delivered. This meant that the entire IFC, including classroom time, pool time, and student presentations, was compressed into one weekend. Saturday morning was classroom time, after which several 'Go Go Vans' (Hong Kong's minivan equivalent to Uber) transported students and dive gear to the Hong Kong University's outdoor Olympic-size pool for lesson demonstrations and practice.



By May the weather is hot in Hong Kong, really hot, and this day was a good example – the sun was beating down, the temperature was in the mid-thirties celsius, and the only way to keep cool was to be in the water with hats on.

Our NIs provided valuable instruction on how to teach (including textbook demonstrations on how to give a lesson without using any words at all!) and useful updates on the latest ways of carrying out certain skills (it would appear that our version of the controlled buoyant lift had drifted slightly from current best practice!).

# Diver Training

## 3.2 Instructor Training

All 16 students, divided into four groups for ease of management, successfully practiced the skills assigned during the course of the afternoon, with our NIs and local ITs rotating around the groups to ensure that they all had a chance to observe and support every student.

As if that first day wasn't long enough, on concluding the afternoon pool session the vans took everyone back to the classroom for the assignment of homework: to prepare a classroom lecture by the following day. Given that this was the evening of the Royal Wedding, and hence an excuse for parties throughout the expat community here, the need for homework was greeted with some less-than muted groans and moans. And the suggestion that 'it shouldn't take long' was greeted with a fair degree of scepticism.

Nevertheless, the following morning, 16 students returned to the classroom with their presentations all prepared, including the inevitable fizzy drinks and diving cylinder visual aids, and spent the morning delivering them to their groups while under the watchful eyes of the teaching staff.

There was even a 'vomit bucket' to illustrate some of the challenges of RIB diving!

A second afternoon in the pool saw 'the SCDC Sixteen' thoroughly challenged with their pool lesson demonstrations. Some frank and direct, but still constructive, feedback was received and the occasional ego was bruised.

Four hours in the hot sun later and the core teaching and evaluation was over, much to the relief of both the students, for whom the experience had been a little stressful, and also for the teachers, who had been enduring the sweltering heat while carefully taking notes every step of the way. All that said, after a brief wrap-up back at the shop, 16 newly minted Assistant Instructors went home with a spring in their step having happily concluded this very intense IFC.

# Diver Training

## 3.2 Instructor Training

Monday was a rest day for the NIs, and a work day for most of the club, but one member, Maddy Prout, volunteered to take the chaps out for a day of fun diving with one of the commercial dive outfits in Hong Kong. This demonstrated to the visitors from the UK that not only do Hong Kong waters have some vibrant fish life, they also have visibility as poor as parts of the UK on a bad day.

Tuesday in Hong Kong was a public holiday, and hence had been earmarked for the Open Water Instructor Course. In an attempt to show the visitors even more of Hong Kong than was perhaps strictly necessary, the classroom activities took place in the school of the club's resident physics teacher, Paul Bayne (the same aforementioned Instructor Trainer), a well-appointed laboratory facility at the ESF Island School campus, which necessitated walking up to the fifth floor, there being no lift.



# Diver Training

## 3.2 Instructor Training

The student body was reduced to 10 candidates at this stage, the others not yet having completed their Dive Leader training. The tension in the group was definitely rising by this point, and the revision of material from the weekend's IFC was surprisingly welcome, while the focus on the upcoming exams only emphasised that trying to complete the entire instructor training programme in such a short timeframe was extremely ambitious. Nevertheless, everyone rose to the challenge, and a productive morning concluded with practical demonstrations being assigned for the afternoon.

The open water training took place at Little Palm Beach, a spot that the club uses regularly for Ocean Diver training owing to its convenient slipway and gently sloping sandy bottom. Once again the sun was at full strength, and lesson briefings were held with everyone huddled under the very limited shade provided by a handful of small trees. A few local Chinese divers looked on bemused as the three groups of students repeatedly waddled backwards into the water down the slipway, only to re-emerge half an hour later

and repeat the whole exercise again. Had they but looked beneath the surface they would have witnessed some exemplary (and some not so exemplary) examples of buoyancy control, DSMB deployment, Alternate Source deployment, and general instructional practice!

One of the curious learnings was that because the club focuses so much on buoyancy skills, several instructor candidates struggled to demonstrate that old favourite, the fin-pivot. Their trim was so well balanced that they remained perfectly horizontal when starting to rise which amused their fellow candidates somewhat!

The afternoon's activities concluded with a final briefing ahead of the exams on the upcoming weekend, and the group dispersed in a state of excitement and nerves.



# Diver Training

## 3.2 Instructor Training

Thursday evenings are the club's regular social gatherings, and this week was no exception, so the visitors were invited to join the whole club at the Aberdeen Boat Club for a few beers and the chance to regale the wider club membership with their war stories of instructional mishaps and cock-ups.

SCDC has been known to describe itself as a drinking club with a diving problem, and the number of members still in

the bar at closing time was testament to how seriously this adage is taken, the refrain 'one for the road' being heard multiple times over the course of the last hour or so! The conclusion of the evening meant that there were only 36 hours to go until the start of the Practical Instruction Examination...



# Diver Training

## 3.2 Instructor Training

Saturday began with one of the club's supporting instructors, Alex Grioni, getting down to Little Palm Beach extremely early to make sure that the tanks, weights, and other odds and sods of supporting equipment were delivered and in place. The NIs had prepared a sophisticated mechanism for assigning demonstration exercises to each student which involved pulling little scraps of torn up paper out of a plastic bag. It was effective, and everybody felt suitably nervous. After a short interlude to prepare lesson plans on slates, the games began, the culmination of an intense week of learning and training.

Everyone gave it their all, the focus and attention to detail was remarkable. Nobody wanted to do badly and everyone wanted to help their fellow candidates by being supportive and attentive 'students' while their teammates were instructing. It was hard not to be aware of the examiners hovering in the background scribbling furiously on their slates, and more than a few candidates emerged from the water expressing concern and doubt about their performances. The examiners attempted to give what

reassurances they could without revealing any results, but a few people left that day somewhat morose.

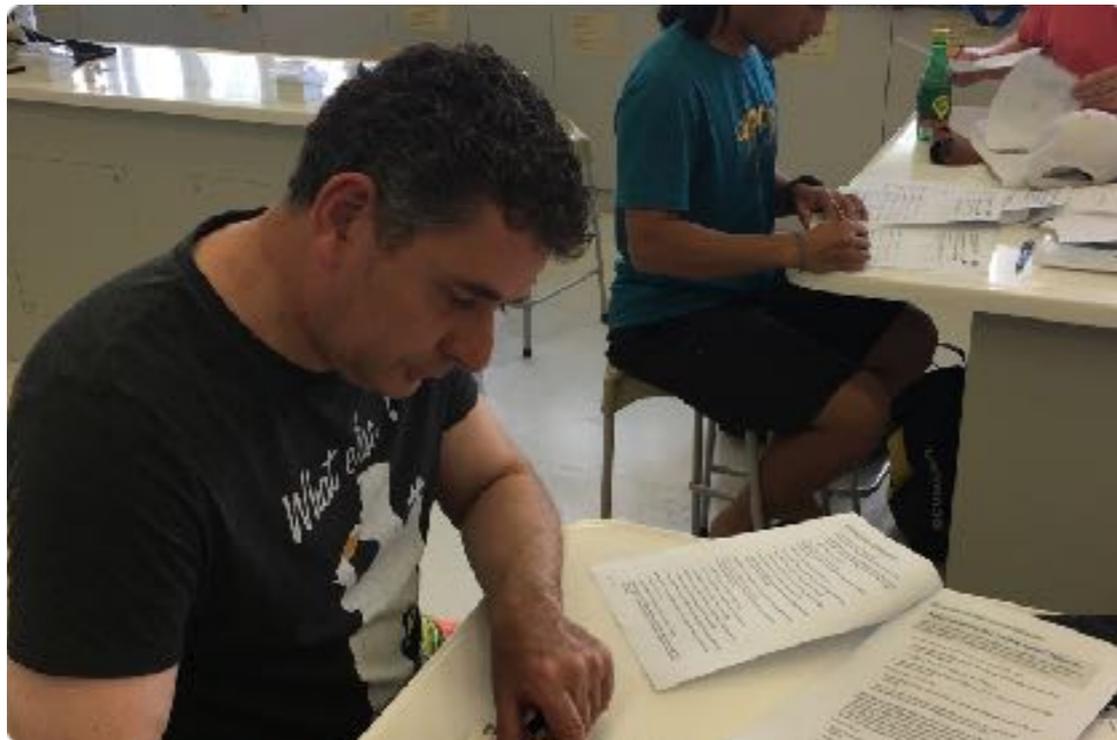
The final day of the exam saw the team back at Paul's physics classroom. It would be fair to say that there was not a lot of chatter that morning, just further nervous remarks and the odd attempt at a joke. Little time was wasted in getting started on the theory paper. Being in a classroom at least had the effect of providing appropriate examination conditions. It really did feel like being back at school again, some people being reminded of experiences thirty years prior!

The theory lesson demonstrations took place after the exam. The candidates were again divided into groups, so that the student audiences were rotated as each candidate had the chance to demonstrate their teaching and PowerPoint skills. This time was rather more intimidating, however, because sat at the back of the class were the two NIs and the club's two instructor trainers too, all taking detailed notes.

# Diver Training

## 3.2 Instructor Training

Nevertheless everyone completed their classroom demonstrations, and it was with extraordinary relief (and a couple of bottles of champagne) that the final debriefing took place. After five intense days of training over a nine-day period, everyone, examiners included, was exhausted and at the same time happy that it was done. The candidates went home, elated to be finished, yet apprehensive about their results. The examiners and supporting staff, however, had many more hours of work ahead of them as they remained behind to write-up their assessments for the 10 candidates.



The message came through at 19:20 that evening, the write-ups were complete, all had been sent back to BSAC HQ. It was over. Most of the collected students/instructors/support staff convened at the Round House in Wan Chai for an evening of craft ale consumption and a final chance to spend time with the Dave and Andy. They'd both been incredibly supportive of the club, its members, and the constraints imposed by trying to deliver and complete an IFC, OWIC, and both theory and practical exams in nine days flat. SCDC was, and remains, deeply grateful to the support of BSAC in this endeavour.



# Diver Training

## 3.2 Instructor Training

The club later learned that all 10 candidates passed both exams. Surely this is another record? Ten instructors within a single club in a single attempt? Guinness should have been on hand to record the whole process!

It needs to be mentioned that within the club a huge, a seriously huge amount of support was provided by other, more experienced members to get the candidates through this week. Mike Belshaw, the club Training Officer, coordinated a crack team, with logistics being coordinated by instructors Alex Grioni and Rob Christie, in addition to all the instructional and examination support provided by the aforementioned Paul Bayne and Andy Niven.

What has the club done with all these new instructors? It's allowed the club to go out and advertise more aggressively for potential Ocean Diver candidates, to offer more Sports Diver training for novice divers trained by other organisations who want to cross over. It's allowed the club to push more Sports Divers through the Dive Leader course,

which in turn allows the club to put on more boats, and hence support more diving for members and guests alike!

And it's provided a fresh injection of energy and enthusiasm for all things diving, there are more people who feel engaged, who want to take part in reef checks, underwater surveys, supporting other local marine charities, etc. It'll be another few years before SCDC runs a similar programme, and in the meantime the new crop of instructors will carry on and promote diving within Hong Kong to anyone who will listen!



# Diver Training

## 3.2 Instructor Training

Club members who attended the IFC then passed the Instructor exams:

1. Francis "Gitz" Cañete
2. Nino Capangpangan
3. Andy Carter
4. Patrick Chea
5. Nicky Gadre
6. Nils Hesse
7. Jo Roberts
8. Chris Roberts
9. James Smith
10. Michael "Micmic" Yu

Club members crossing over from PADI attending the Open Water Instructor Course:

1. Norie Ishida

Club members who attended the Instructor Foundation Course:

1. Simon Chivers
2. Chris Dillon
3. Sam Finch
4. Maddy Prout
5. Stuart Sharpless

Club support team:

1. Mike Belshaw (Training Officer)
2. Paul Bayne (Instructor Trainer)
3. Andy Niven (Instructor Trainer)
4. Robert Christie (Advanced Instructor)
5. Alex Grioni (Advanced Instructor)

# Diver Training

## 3.3 Equipment

Over the years SCDC has always tried to ensure it was well equipped to meet any regulatory safety requirements.

For a long time the club 'hub' was the compressor room which was a store room attached to the Henry Fok swimming pool in the Hong Kong University recreation grounds. SCDC regularly hires one or two lanes of this outdoor pool for training events and try dives. It also has the added bonus of overlooking the Lamma channel, which while beautiful, can be more than a bit distracting while training!

To support our busy diving and training programme, the club built up quite a large equipment inventory of two compressors, 12 Apeks regulators, 40 tanks ranging between 8.6 and 11 litres, over 20 BCDs and enough lead weights to sink a battleship (well, maybe a very small battleships skiff!). Inevitably, tank filling duties were never very popular even with club members who had cars (Who wants to spend hours in an airtight concrete noisy box?). So

the tank filling rota, which ran for several years, eventually fell by the wayside.

For many years the equipment officer Tam, or more formally know as Mr Tam Wai Hung, maintained the room in a spotless and incredibly well organised manner. It was joked that the only way to make the compressor room look nicer would be to add net curtains.



# Diver Training

## 3.3 Equipment

However, as the demographic of the club changed over the years and fewer members had cars, the compressor room location, club tanks and BCDs and regs became less of a benefit and much more of a cost and burden to the club. So in 2015, the tough decision was made to clear out the compressor room and storage, sell off/give away the equipment and hand the room back to the university. Our two compressors and all the diving equipment was sold. This actually proved to be a very successful arrangement and massively reduced the organising, arranging and time spent by so many club members in running club dive trips. It also provided money, time and other resources that could be used for more diving, projects and trips.

To ensure that we maintain more than the basic safety standards we have three O2 kits plus three first aid kits, all of which are stored either on our regular boats or are taken to whatever dive boat/platform we are using by the DM. We also have various descent lines, buoys, shot weights and floating surface lines to meet most conditions we are likely to encounter.



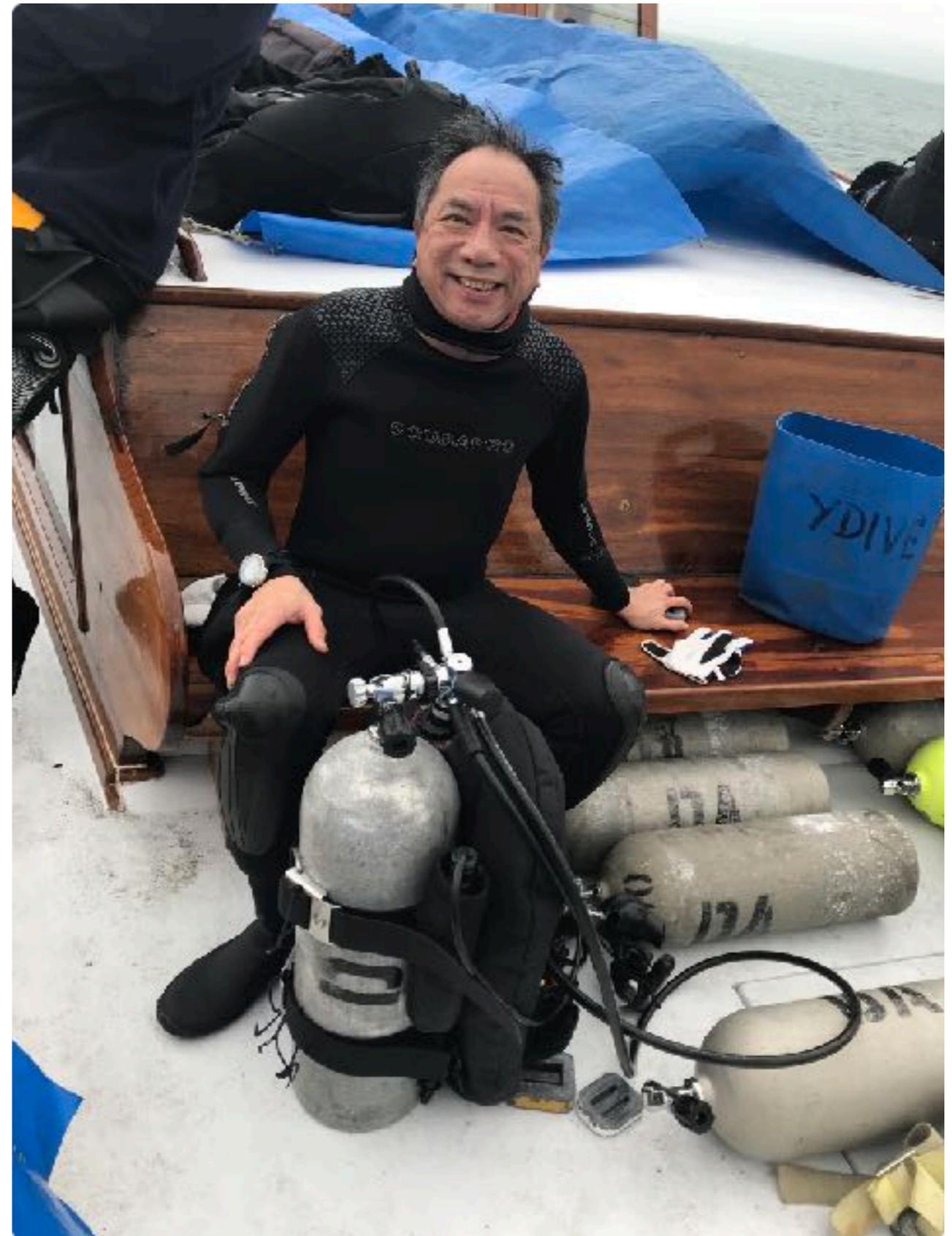
# Diver Training

## 3.3 Equipment

This equipment is very useful for some of our more challenging dives around Beaufort Island or as we call it the "Dark Side". Here depths of 40 metres and beyond are possible and visibility rarely reaches 2 metres, even with the led torches. It can make for a challenging dive!

The Dive Manager also has a kit which includes printed dive lists, safety information and charts for Hong Kong waters. The kit also contains spare DSMBs which are borrowed by guest divers. We have a club rule that all divers must carry one - no exceptions!

In recent years we have updated our first aid kits and invested in an automatic external defibrillator (AED). Our next investment will be a training AED as well as an AED Annie to ensure club members keep up to date in the use of this critical first aid device.



# Diving Activities

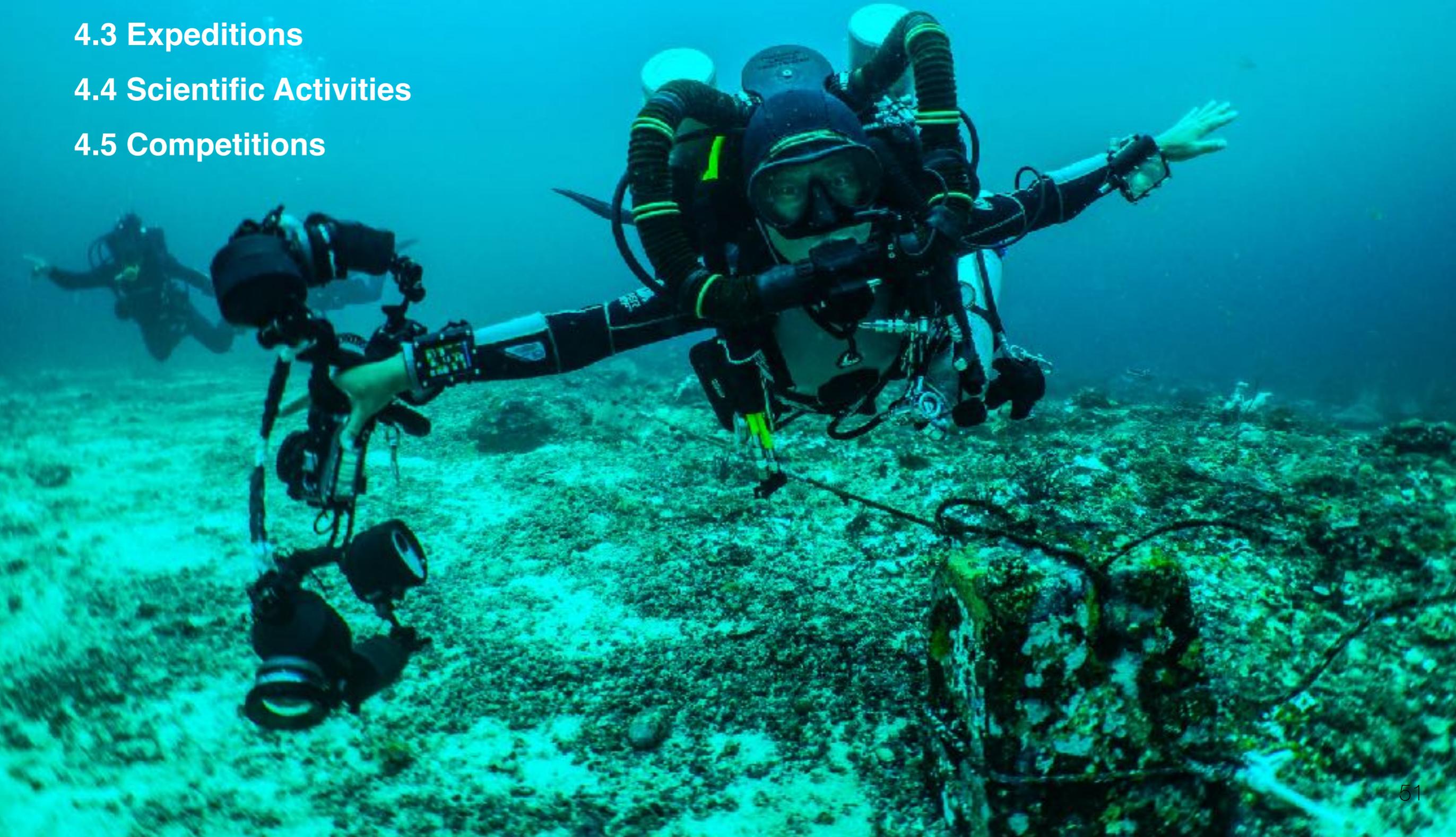
4.1 Branch Dives

4.2 A Typical Day Diving

4.3 Expeditions

4.4 Scientific Activities

4.5 Competitions



# Diver Activities

## 4.1 Branch Dives

2018 was a very successful year for branch dives. The club actually dives all year round even when water temperatures can dip to around 12 degrees in winter and hit up to 30 degrees at the height of the summer, not to mention another 5-10 degrees at the surface.

Most club dives occur in three areas around Hong Kong waters. Sai Kung to the north east is generally considered the best inshore diving around Hong Kong. A series of islands form a natural harbour, called Port Shelter (for obvious reasons) and all of the islands there are popular dive sites. To the north, the club also dives along the Tolo Harbour. The third area frequented by SCDC involves dives out of the Aberdeen Boat Club and the waters to the south east of Hong Kong Island, where stronger currents scour away the mud and allow access to some deeper and much darker dive sites. Check out the map on the next page to get your bearings!

Most of our diving occurs on large comfortable junks, which we charter for our club dives. This is the equivalent of hard

boat diving in the UK. These vessels are licensed to take 20-30 divers, depending on size. They are either family-friendly day boats - which we have to customise for the day's diving, arranging tanks, transferring our safety equipment, providing charts and generally managing the boat - or dedicated dive boats that we charter through local dive shops. The advantage of the dive boats is that they generally have all the required gear, tanks, weights and knowledgeable crew.



# Diver Activities

## 4.1 Branch Dives

### Hong Kong Dive Sites



# Diver Activities

## 4.1 Branch Dives

Both family-friendly and dive junks generally only manage 6-8 knots, so we don't really get anywhere too quickly. Occasionally we also charter a much faster boat called *Kidusi*, which was built as a sport fishing boat. *Kidusi* allows us to access sites much further afield such as the Ninepin Islands. *Kidusi* can race up the coast at over 30 knots but can only carry 10 divers.

Shore dives are also popular and generally take place off the Clearwater Bay Peninsula. One popular site is Lobster Bay or Lung Ha Wan. The site is also known as Artillery Ramp, because you enter the water alongside what remains of a concrete ramp built by the British army for the purpose of loading and unloading artillery hundreds of years ago but was destroyed by the army in the early 90's after it became popular with smugglers who used it to load contraband and stolen goods on super fast speed boats bound for China.

Like the UK some of our members are more seasonal divers and will generally start coming out around May and keep going through to October. Others wisely invest in a drysuit or a semi-dry and extend their diving throughout the year.

Jumping into a drysuit as soon as the water temperature goes below 24 degrees may seem a little laughable to many UK divers, but living out here in Asia does thin the blood and makes you feel the cold a lot more!

The winter months can be very rewarding, though as generally the cooler water is clearer and a little bluer than during the summer months.



# Diver Activities

## 4.1 Branch Dives

Most dives sites can be reached within a one-hour trip from whichever port, and as a general rule the divers living on Hong Kong island meet for an early morning coffee at Pier number 3 in Central before sharing a minivan ride to the dive boat pick up.

A very popular diving option during 2018 was hiring one or two speedboats from Mr Tsui, who runs a floating restaurant and fish farm in San Mun Tsai, in the north east of Hong Kong. Mr Tsui is a very popular person with club members and also a diver himself. He is unfailingly great fun to be around and very knowledgeable of the waters around the Tolo Harbour area and beyond.

The chance to get to a dive site in around 20 minutes as opposed to what would take around an hour in a large junk is a great benefit and a popular fun day out for our members. It also means we can visit three sites instead of two as is normally the case on a junk. Of the four speedboat dives we did this year, the highlight was undoubtedly Saturday, 29th of September, when after many years we

made a return to Tung Ping Chau Island in north east Hong Kong. Diving the coral garden there after many years was an utter delight.

In total the club enjoyed 27 dive trips throughout 2018, involving a grand total of 577 dives for the year. The 27 trips included one long weekend away to Subic Bay in the Philippines on the 15th to the 18th of June and also a two-day dive camp on the 3rd to the 4th of November.



# Diver Activities

## 4.1 Branch Dives

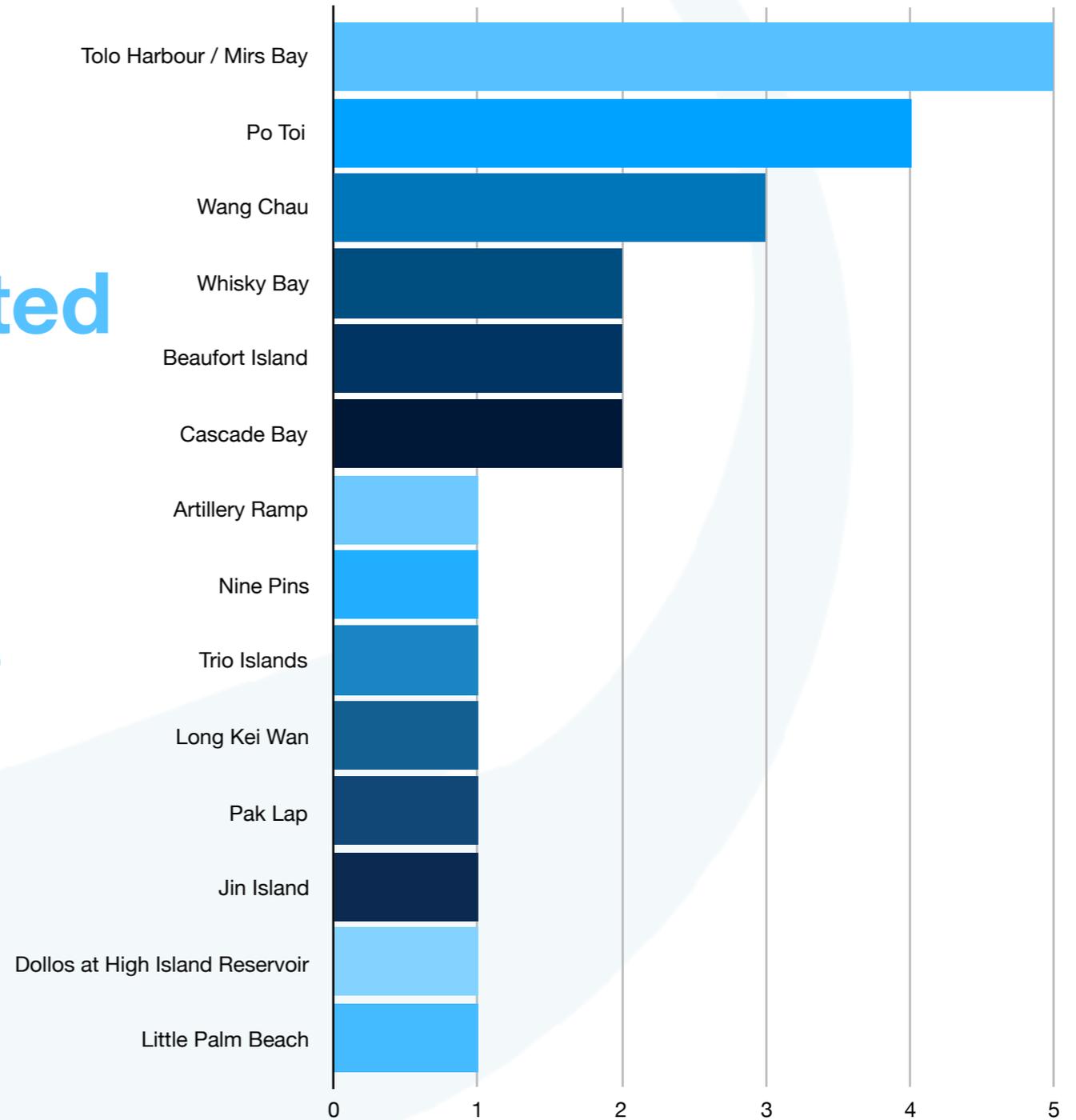
### 2018 Hong Kong Diving Activity

**577** Dives Completed

**27** Diving Days

**14** Locations Visited

Diving Locations Visited



# Diver Activities

## 4.2 A Typical Day Diving

A day out with SCDC is always fun. So much fun that we just had to make a video to accompany our entry. We hope you like it! In the meantime, we also keep a blog so everyone can stay up to date with our latest antics. It's a really popular part of our web site. Here's a typical outing from 2018. Enjoy!

### **Splashing around at Pak Lap**

8th July 2018



We had a somewhat testing start to the day with only two of the three vans arriving to transport our rowdy central crowd combined with a rather unfortunate opening of the heavens resulting in a rather tardy arrival time in Sai Kung. Throw in the crazy Sunday seaside crowds and the fact that four of our divers had decided to bring along their own surface cover in the form of a personal yacht, our DM for the day had quite a task on his hands to coordinate the day's proceedings.

After apologies were made for absent vans, delayed arrival times, unpopular dive sites, dive boat tails, allowing Belshaw on the boat and life in general during the dive briefing... the first wave of divers got underway. Moods were transformed as realisation dawned that we could see a whole 5 meters away in the shallows at Pak Lap.

*The site was teeming with life and largely sheltered from the chilling thermoclines blessing the other locations around Hong Kong.*

*With his choice of dive site validated and critics silenced, our DM could finally relax and enjoy his dive. The weather didn't agree though. The summer showers appeared at the most inconvenient moments throughout the day - wave 1 exit / wave 2 entry was no exception. Cue torrential downpour number 2.*

*It was an eager bunch of divers asking permission to splash for dive number two. Well, those that didn't have a better offer at least! Minimum surface intervals were enforced (much to the despair of one) and diving continued after lunch. Underwater palm trees were found, photos were taken, and a nudi or two were spotted to keep our resident Italian satiated.*

*Timing was tight as the second wave surfaced from dive 2 and our crew, ever anxious to get home for tea, were hastily gesturing to the black clouds looming on the horizon. Cue torrential downpour number 3. You'd have thought a T8 was about to hit with the reaction from the captain and his wife but by some miracle we survived and we're back on our merry way to Sai Kung in under 10 minutes. Go figure...*

*Canada day was duly celebrated and those with a compass on their Canadian computers were provided with suitable beverages. One particularly bad influence was also navigating her way around the boat with Canadian ice wine.*

*Our next outing coincides with the DM's birthday... more celebrations to look forward to on Saturday! See you there!*



# Diver Activities

## 4.3 Expeditions

For shipwreck lovers, Subic Bay is one of the most popular destinations that can be easily reached from Hong Kong. It is a two-hour direct flight to Clark International Airport. The overall travel time is similar to flying from Birmingham to the Shetlands!

Subic has over 19 wrecks, most originating from World War II and from both the US and Japan. They include jet fighters, patrol boats, landing ships, a battle cruiser and cargo ships. Because Subic Bay was for many years a US Navy port, the wrecks were strictly prohibited from exploration activities. It wasn't until 1991 when the US Navy left Subic Bay due to Mt Pinatubo volcanic eruptions that divers could start to access the wrecks.

In June 2018, a group of 10 SCDC divers decided to escape Hong Kong for a long weekend and make a dive trip to Subic Bay. Most of us went straight to the airport after work having checked in our luggage early in the morning before going to the office. Unfortunately, our flight was delayed a couple of hours due to a typhoon going through Manila and

we ended up watching a game of the football World Cup before boarding. Luckily, we still managed arrive at our hotel before 2am which meant that we wouldn't miss out on any diving opportunities, or so we hoped.

Before 8am, most of us were already waiting at the dive shop located just around the corner from our hotel and setting up our dive gear, donning wet suits and getting ready to dive. Then we waited and waited and....



# Diver Activities

## 4.3 Expeditions

In Subic Bay, all dive boats need permission from the Coast Guard to leave port. Unfortunately on this particular day the heavy rain and the driving winds (which had delayed our flight from Hong Kong) were now stopping us from getting the green light to go diving. Hmm...

The dive shop continued to contact the Coast Guard every half hour, which kept us guessing will we, won't we, we will, we won't ....dive. Unfortunately, it ended up being a no-dive day. So being a creative bunch, we went for a beer dive instead, still in our wetsuits and ate lots of pizza and finned our way through a lots of bottles of PSM (Philippine San Miguel, a fave local beer.)

The next morning we, finally we got the green light from the Coast Guard to go diving. However, due to the bad weather from the previous week, the beach was covered with rubbish and the sea looked chocolate brown. Still, we were very optimistic as we believed that inside the wrecks the viz should be good, at least no worse than the viz we sometimes find in Hong Kong waters. Our dive group was

split into the more adventurous with twins and others in a single-tank group.

The first dive was on *El Capitan* which is located at the western edge of the sheltered waters within Subic Bay. She is one of everyone's favourites and the most revered of the local wrecks. This World War II freighter sits on her port side in 22m, intact despite 70 plus years since she sank. She's 92m long, 14m across, with a single 76mm gun on her bow as her only armament.



# Diver Activities

## 4.3 Expeditions

Our dive group (the twins group) approached the wreck marker buoy and discovered that the water still looked brown. However once we got below 3m, the visibility opened up to a reasonable 10m and was noticeably warmer. Given all of us had dived together on numerous occasions, we were able to organise and approach the wreck in an orderly fashion. We were penetrating the wreck in single file through the corridors and then ascended to complete our deco stops.

Leaving *El Capitan* by a fast boat ride and a short surface interval, we moved across to a wreck commonly known as the *LST* (Landing Ship Tank, 'the ship that won the war!') which is an amphibious landing boat designed and built during World War II. It was mainly used for the US Navy's assault landing operations in Subic Bay.

We joined the rest of the group at this dive site and on command from the skipper we back rolled and dropped down into the brown water that didn't really improve until we penetrated the wreck. As during the first dive, divers



remained organised and disciplined going through the wreck, trying to keep an eye on the various exit points. With poor viz on the outside, this dive was considered to be the worst of the trip but we weren't complaining, we're wreck diving! After two interesting morning dives we headed back to base for lunch.

# Diver Activities

## 4.3 Expeditions

The weather was looking good for the afternoon dive, and the Coast Guard gave the go-ahead to dive the most famous wreck in Subic, which may even be one of the most famous wrecks in the Philippines, (fanfare!) the *USS New York*! It was built in 1891, was equipped with 8-inch guns and was once the flagship of the US Navy. She sank in 1933 and lies in 16m to 30m. At 110m long she is considered to be the largest shipwreck in the bay.

Most of us have dived the *New York* before but as the viz wasn't improving and we were in a group, we opted for a swim around instead of any internal exploration. Swimming around the guns is always a good photo op and once we'd taken our shots we started our ascent.

By the time we finished our deco and climbed back onto the boat, the sun was starting to dip and we were told that was the last dive of the day. We tried to twist the skipper's arm to give us a night dive as we had spare tanks onboard but he wasn't having it. He had to be back for his tea. Still, we'd had a nice wreck dive and everyone had a smile on their face.

Back on the beach, the Subic Bay sign became a great prop for a club photo before returning to the hotel for showering and gear washing before another night in the bars along the bay. Next day with the flight departing at 4pm, it was a case of chilling out with yet more eating and drinking. A few of the group opted for a relaxing massage after all the heavy duty diving and exertion! By 6pm we were back in Hong Kong and nearly ready to start work the next day. Just another typical long weekend trip for the SCDC.



# Diver Activities

## 4.4 Scientific Activities

Over the years, and even more so in 2018, SCDC has made efforts to be involved in a variety of government, public and private projects and programmes that aim to monitor the status of the marine environment around Hong Kong. This involves being participants in data gathering and also helping to promote awareness to the public as well as the diving community.

### AFCD Reef Check

(Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Dept)

Since 2013, SCDC has supported the Reef Check, which is managed by the AFCD in Hong Kong. This an annual survey is carried out to monitor the health of a series of coral reefs around Hong Kong.

Starting in 2013 we were assigned the Ngau Shi Wu Wan reef to monitor and since establishing the benchmark, we have returned each August to conduct the survey using exactly the same methodology and approach to ensure we are consistent and accurate in the production of the data.

### Ngau Shi Wu Wan - GPS Location

Start	N22°31.657.	E114°16.835
End	N22°31.594	E114°16.786
Dist to Shore	~10	Depth~3.5m

The survey method comprises three dives along a 100m transect line, carried out by three buddy pairs. The first dive is a fish count survey, followed by a survey of invertebrates. The last dive is about establishing the health of the coral. Once the data is collected it is compiled in a report that's provided to the AFCD before the end of October. To date, we've found that the state of the reef hasn't changed too much year-on-year so while it may not be getting much better, the good news is it's is not getting worse.

All the results from the annual surveys can be found on the AFCD website:

[https://www.afcd.gov.hk/english/conservation/con\\_mar/con\\_mar\\_cor/con\\_mar\\_cor\\_hkrc/con\\_mar\\_cor\\_hkrc5.html](https://www.afcd.gov.hk/english/conservation/con_mar/con_mar_cor/con_mar_cor_hkrc/con_mar_cor_hkrc5.html)

# Diver Activities

## 4.4 Scientific Activities

### ECF Sea Without Litter

(Environmental and Conservation Fund)

Between 2017 and 2018, SCDC joined a World Wildlife Fund (WWF) programme called “ECF Sea Without Litter”. The programme aimed to educate the public about the marine litter issue in Hong Kong. WWF runs a range of initiatives and activities in Hong Kong one of them being underwater litter pick-up. SCDC adhered to the programme and during the 2017 and 2018 reef check, a dive was also dedicated to these activities. The site assigned for the reef check, however, did not present too much underwater litter. A bigger litter clean-up activity was carried out by the club on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2018. The activity started the week preceding the clean-up with a WWF talk held at the club’s venue. The talk included a short video extrapolated from *A Plastic Ocean*. The WWF introduced some of the problems related to litter in Hong Kong concluding the talk with an explanation of the proper clean-up to be carried out after few days.



We coordinated the various groups, managed the logistics and recruited 41 volunteers to help on the day. Once on the boat, we headed towards one of the beaches on Lamma Island and cleaned a 300m long beach. After filling 74 large rubbish bags, used whatever we could find to store even more rubbish, collecting 325kg of plastic and other waste.

The day was filmed by a Taiwanese film crew and the footage was broadcast in Taiwan as part of an ecological programme. The long day ended with a tired but well attended evening dinner.

# Diver Activities

## 4.4 Scientific Activities

### The Humphead Wrasse - Dr Yvonne Sadovy

Another talk held during one of our social evenings was given by Dr Yvonne Sadovy. The talk was entitled "Hope for the Humphead wrasse - how to conserve a reef fish giant".

Dr. Sadovy is a university professor based in Hong Kong but involved in many marine-related conservation projects all around Southeast Asia (you may recognise her from *Blue Planet II*, where she led the expedition to the grouper spawning in French Polynesia!).

The talk was centred on the work she and her students have been doing to create a sustainable fishery of the Napoleon Wrasse in Southeast Asia. These magnificent fish are endangered and Hong Kong is the main hub of legal and illegal trafficking of live Napoleans for the restaurant trade. They're considered to be prestigious fare in Hong Kong and China and it was great to hear what we can do to help solve this problem.

### BioBlitz

Another event that SCDC members supported in 2018 was BioBlitz, which is organised by Tai Tam Tuk Foundation, an NGO based in Hong Kong. BioBlitz is a race against time to discover as many species of plants, animals and fungi as possible in a set location and over a set time frame. This event involves scientists, students, children, naturalists and other members of the public working together to create a snapshot of the variety of life to be found on Hong Kong Island. There were also education activities carried out during the event.



# Diver Activities

## 4.5 Competitions

### The City Nature Challenge

The City Nature Challenge is a worldwide competition in which cities compete against each other by taking photographs of nature (plants, insects, birds, fungi, animals, fish coral, etc) on the free app, **iNaturalist**. It's also a fantastic way to educate participants on the amazing biodiversity that's right on their own doorstep.

On 27-30th April 2018, Hong Kong took part in the City Nature Challenge and placed in the top 10 out of 68 cities for all categories. A total of 20,561 observations, covering 2,941 species, were recorded. All details can be found on the website below:

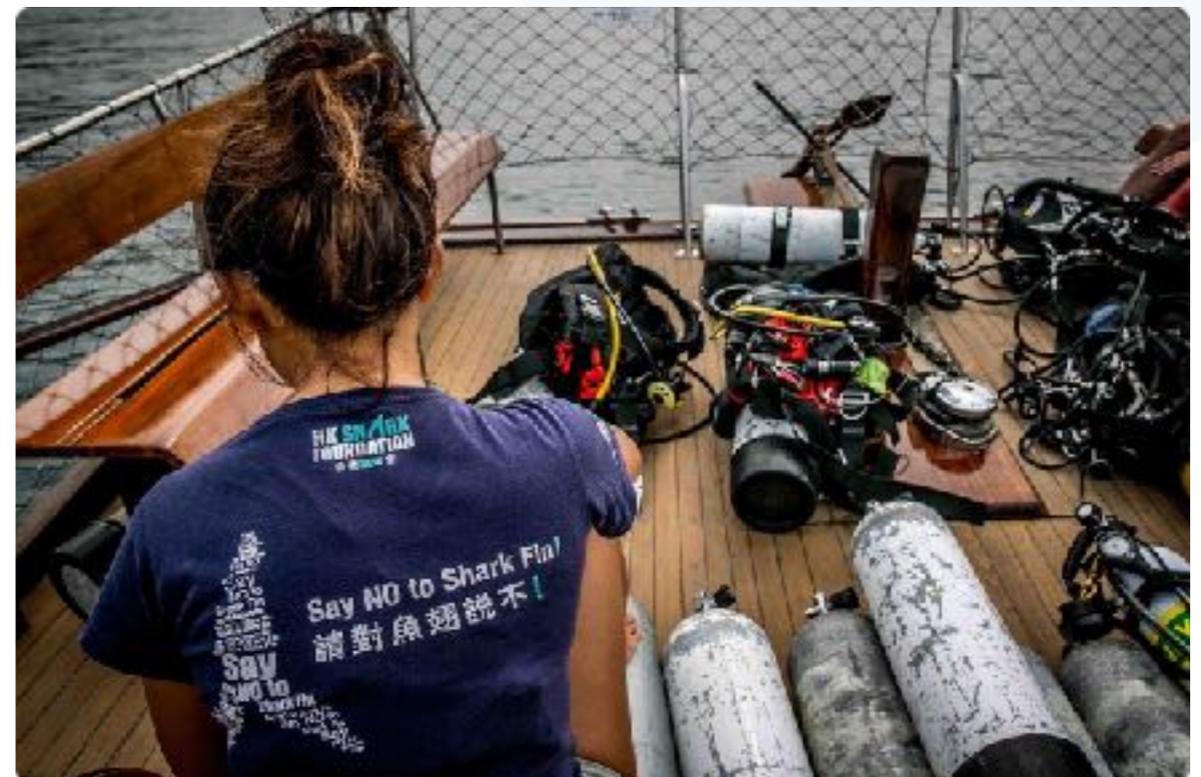
<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2018-hong-kong?tab=stats>

On one of those days, SCDC organised a usual two-dive trip and members were encouraged to take underwater photos and submit them for identification. Of the 2,941 species recorder during those three days, 144 (4.96%) were

ray-finned fish, 136 (4.68%) mollusks and SCDC submitted some of them.

And whilst Hong Kong may be small in terms of its territory, we're big in terms of biodiversity. The city was proud to take the number one spot in Asia in the challenge.

Roll on 2019!



# Diver Activities

## 4.5 Competitions

### The Ad Hoc Trophy

Our club has a single prize, the Ad Hoc Trophy, which is presented at the annual Christmas party.

Awarded “in recognition of services to diving beyond either expectation or belief”, the prize was created in 2005 by Brian Darvell. The trophy that Brian created for the award was made from part of the bronze propeller that had shattered when a bulk salt-carrier hit a submerged ledge called One Foot Rock.

Over the years, recipients have been recognised for different accomplishments. One received a BSAC Lifetime Achievement Award, while another organised a successful trip to Chuuk (Truk) Lagoon.

However, superhuman feats are optional. The first winner was rewarded for being the club dogsbody. Over the years its been awarded for doing well on dive courses, passing a string of skill development courses or arranging a year of great social events. But its not always awarded for something worthwhile, the 2007 recipient was recognised “for self-inflicted injuries incurred during skinny dipping on

dive camp” where he decided to charge the incoming waves with much fanfare and large amounts of beer and sped off in a zig zag run generally towards the sea but tripped over a rock and nosedived into the sand, broke his collarbone, stubbed his toe and sandpapered his face before even getting close to wet. He was still finding sand in all sorts of places weeks after!



# Diver Activities

## 4.5 Competitions

### The Ad Hoc Trophy

2018's award had only one name on it, and it had to go to the guy who organised our massive instructor training event, Mike Belshaw who not only gave up his flat to Dave and Andy the visiting National Instructors, he also included his beer fridge (with optional snacks) and by mistake, his 'hidden' whiskey bar location for the entire period! Absolute true dedication well above and beyond the call!

Through Mike's efforts, 16 people completed the Instructor Foundation Course, 10 passed the Open Water Instructor exams and one instructor crossed over (see Section 3.2).



### Previous Ad Hoc Trophy Winners

2005 - **Paul Bayne** for being favourite club dogsbody

2006 - **Trevor Richmond** for the Truk Lagoon trip

2007 - **Jason Pacey** for Dive Camp self inflicted injuries

2008 - **Brian Darvell** Endless Contribution to the club

2009 - BSAC Lifetime Achievement Award to **Tam Wai Hung** for organizing and leading the Advanced Instructor course.

2010 - **Catheryn Chu** for never saying 'no' and being a member of the 'one for the road' club.

2011 - **Catheryn Chu** (again!) for being a depth junkie

2012 - **Rob Christie** for being a superstar Chairman!

2013 - **Andy Niven** for Sense of Humour and Humility!

2014 - **Mike Belshaw** for being Treasurer and an indispensable member of the Club.

2015 - **Tam Wai Hung** for his work on the dry side of organising the equipment and negotiating deals to offload equipment.

2016 - **Alex Grioni** for building an excellent website that returned the Club to the digital age.

2017 - **Chris Roberts** for his colourful use of words and equally colourful fashion sense

2018 - **Mike Belshaw** for his training program and graciously donating his whisky collection to the greater cause.

An aerial photograph of a rugged coastline. The water is a deep, clear blue-green, contrasting with the brown, layered rock formations. A small white boat with a blue stripe is visible in the upper left quadrant. The rocks are jagged and have some sparse green vegetation on top. The overall scene is serene and natural.

# General Activities

**5.1 Branch Meetings**

**5.3 Publicity**

**5.2 The Social Scene**

**5.4 Inter-Branch Liaison**

# General Activities

## 5.1 Branch Meetings

Every family needs a home. It's of course particularly wonderful if that home includes a bar, restaurant and pool. Club night for SCDC is Thursday, and since the early 1990s every week it has been held without fail at the ABC (Aberdeen Boat Club as it is more formally known). The Aberdeen Boat Club, which celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary last year, is the smaller and more relaxed of Hong Kong's two major sailing clubs. Being dedicated to the pursuit of water-based sports, it would appear a natural fit to allow its facilities to be used by divers, and in recent years the relationship has become closer as the parties have recognised the mutual benefits a deeper relationship.

### *The Road to Nirvana*

In, we are reliably informed, either May or June in 1995, (or was it 1994?), the members of SCDC drank their first beers on a Thursday night as honorary invited guests of the ABC. Evidently, the exact date has been lost in the haze of forgotten memories, but we know it was PSMs or 'Philippine San Miguel' to quote the full name. The climate of Hong

Kong alternating for most of the year between hot and dry and hot and humid is far from ideal for the enjoyment of fine ales and thus for those whose tastes are on a higher plane than gassy draft lager the only choice has been the squat brown bottles of PSM. As it was then, it is now, the PSM has always been the beer of choice of SCDC members.

Prior to this, in the 1980's the club's compressor room (basically two rent-free rooms under the swimming pool) was located at the American International School in Repulse Bay, where members used to collect and fill tanks on a Thursday night before heading to the a set of buildings on Beach Road going by the name of the Seaview. It was right on the beach and the tide came up to the back of the building at high tide.

The club later relocated to the Lord Nelson the other side of Beach Road, and when notice was given that this establishment was to be demolished, the club relocated to the then trendy Ligo Resort Bar across the road.

# General Activities

## 5.1 Branch Meetings

The only memorable thing about the Ligo appears to be is that the landlady was a Brit and served huge bowls of peanuts. By the late 1980s that too was to be developed and the club moved to the Lifeguards Club above the Tin Hau statue at the far end of Repulse Bay Beach with its spectacular first floor restaurant. In the club's November 1990 newsletter this room was described as "having the atmosphere and décor of classic Chinese architecture and a Bangkok brothel".

At some point in the early 1990s (May 1994 has been suggested along with 1992 and 1993!) at very short notice the American International School reclaimed their compressor room (the aforementioned two rooms under the pool) and the club was forced to move within two weeks. One member who was associated with the Hong Kong University was able to get us access to an unused, purpose-built compressor room under the Henry Fok Swimming Pool, part of the University's main sports complex in Sha Wan Drive Sandy Bay. This remained the club's compressor room until September 2015, when the decision was made to sell the compressor and the rest of the equipment.



# General Activities

## 5.1 Branch Meetings

Back in 1994, on the night the gear was moved to the new location, the then thirsty members went in search of a new bar. All that could be found was a small refreshment pavilion on top of a building adjacent to the grandstand. Although a purveyor of fine cup noodles and pleasant during the summer months it was not so pleasant as the weather cooled and in October of that same year (whichever year that was) the operator of said tuck shop announced closure until the following summer. Can you spot a theme here?

In the early 1990s the ABC had decided to set up its own BSAC Branch and on 29 April 1992 the first official meeting of the ABC Divers was held. A number of the divers at this inaugural meeting were members of both clubs and SCDC members had on an informal basis had been drinking there and using the facilities for formal social events. The ABC being a members club, it was decreed that all members of the dive section also had to be members of the ABC which was a major limiting factor. Being predominantly a boating club and this club was short-lived. Members can only remember two diving-related events, one a snorkelling

course at which two students showed up and a dive at which the objective ended up being trying to find an ABC member's boat that had caught fire and sunk. After originally finding the missing vessel and marking it, or so they thought, this vessel disappeared never to be seen again, giving an indication of the visibility in southern Hong Kong waters.



# General Activities

## 5.1 Branch Meetings

With the effective cessation of the ABC Divers and now without a tuck shop to call home, the then Chairman and Treasurer of SCDC (Ian Thomas and Trevor Richmond) approached the ABC to see if they would be allowed to use the facilities on a Thursday mid-week, this being a quiet night at the club. This was agreed by the ABC General Committee on a trial basis with the proviso that the minimum bar spend be at least HKD 2,000 (£200) per night. They kept records for the first few weeks but such was the expenditure they soon stopped and the SCDC has been a welcome guest at the ABC every Thursday since. Over the years there have been the odd grumble at various times from ABC members about the number of divers filling all available tables but it is now widely acknowledged that Thursday night is Dive Night with the full support of all concerned at the ABC.

### *The Joys of Sharing*

Memberships of clubs in Hong Kong is both expensive and jealously guarded so to be able to use the ABC in this way

is a unique gesture. Ordinarily to buy a drink ABC members are required to sign a chit which is then included in their account to be settled monthly. To overcome this, the ABC kindly allows their guests from SCDC to pay by credit card if they're not also ABC members.

In addition, the pontoon of the ABC provides an ideal start point for diving on the south side of the island, providing a convenient place for a junk to tie up and load cylinders and for the divers to first enjoy a fried breakfast in the coffee shop.



# General Activities

## 5.1 Branch Meetings

The South China Diving Club is very aware of the value of the relationship with the ABC and has tried to make sure that in addition to the bar spend we are seen as an integral and positive influence.

In March 2018 we hosted in the ABC a public WWF educational talk to discuss the serious marine litter problem in Hong Kong at which the film *A Plastic Ocean* was shown. The next weekend this was followed by a joint club beach clean-up organised by SCDC but open to all ABC members. We also contribute articles with plenty of photographs to the in-house magazine, most recently showcasing the results of the clubs 2018 photographic competition and previously showcasing the clubs recent trip to Christmas Island.

But perhaps the most important aspect for SCDC is the element of certainty, every member of SCDC knows that on a Thursday night the club will be meeting and that the location will be the bar of the ABC. As has been made clear in other sections an expat life can be a lonely one and in the SCDC many people have found the perfect surrogate family



# General Activities

## 5.1 Branch Meetings

or at the very least a group of like-minded, frequently cantankerous but always entertaining and supportive friends. In this regard the ABC bar on a Thursday night is like an episode of *Cheers* - somewhere to go where people are always glad you came.

The knowledge that the club has a regular meeting place has made it much easier for new potential members to find us. They don't need to worry where the club will be meeting in any particular week. They can simply turn up at the ABC when they are ready and available.



# General Activities

## 5.2 The Social Scene

Besides our rigorous weekend club dive schedule, our members' favourite is gathering every Thursday night at the Aberdeen Boat Club, to let off the steam of a hard day's work or enjoy a fun yet educational talk from other members and NGO peer institutions.

For many members, the ABC is a pleasant and unique experience. The ABC has not only the most friendly staff and a lovely dining and social environment, but also a swimming pool for confined water diving training. Thanks to the good relationship between two clubs, the ABC welcomes SCDC members every Thursday, providing a home for members to connect over food, drinks and talks. SCDC has not only encouraged divers to be part of the dive community, but also has invited them to experience other local clubs and communities, in this case it is the ABC. For anyone who is new to Hong Kong, like many of us, it is like killing two birds with one stone.

Beyond the Thursday social nights, club members will never run out of open invitations in their inbox and WhatsApp



group, for either seasonal celebrations, dive shop and dive exhibition visits, not even mention all those epic birthday parties. What really touched me in 2018, was when the Roberts family decided to move back to the UK, the round after round of goodbye parties the club put together for them, showed the deep connections that are built among our members.

# General Activities

## 5.2 The Social Scene

### *Knowledge is power*

We all enjoy a beer after a day of hard work on our Thursday social night, as well as after those weekend dives. But the most valuable thing for me, is the massive amount of knowledge I picked up, during these social events.

I've done courses with multiple associations, however, I still have new questions to ask and new dive scenarios to solve. Courses gave me fundamental knowledge on diving, but the opportunities to learn from other experienced divers made up more. The more frequently we meet, the faster we get our questions answered. That translates not only to confidence, progression and financial savings, but also knowledge that fills the gaps that are critical for a diver's safety. Many members like myself have been taking diving courses from at least 3-4 dive associations. But we all agree that true learning sometimes happens even more so from these informal occasions with experienced divers that you know, respect and trust implicitly as a result of the nature of a club environment.

### *Beyond diving*

As part of writing this, I asked many members 'what's your favourite part of the club?'. The answers were surprisingly similar. It is "friends" here. It wasn't about a particular course, a particular venue or event, or even particular aspect of diving. What holds the club together is the bond of members built over the years and the reassuring feeling that the community is always there when we want to be better divers or are simply looking for some good old companionship.



# General Activities

## 5.2 The Social Scene

Speaking of my own experience, there is more to that. As a mainland Chinese, who studied in France, lived and worked in Germany, and is now on my fourth year in Hong Kong, I have never found a place like the SCDC where I have been able to quickly meet members from all walks of life. By observing how they treasure life and all the other good things within it, how they problem-solve and how they lead, I get to see the perspectives from members who are so different from me, in nationality, age, job, social group, etc.

In a summary, SCDC has created a rich type of different encounters for members to learn, to grow and to connect. Going forward, my role in the club, shared by our driven committee and volunteering members, is to continue the efforts to make sure the experience of being part of our club is good for both the new and existing members.



# General Activities

## 5.3 Publicity

### Magazine Articles

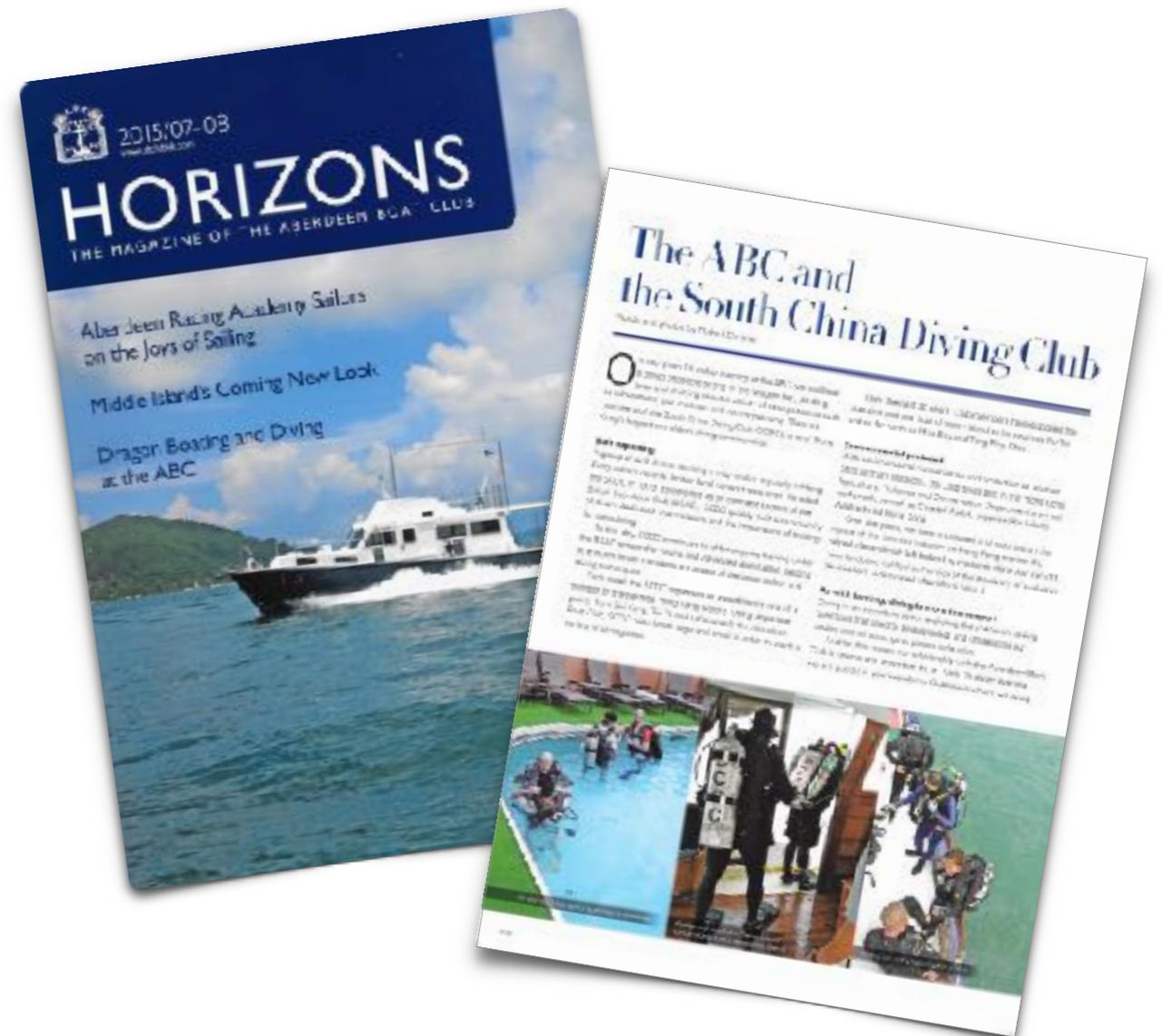
The Aberdeen Boat Club, where we meet every Thursday, publishes a monthly magazine called *Horizons*. The March 2018 edition of *Horizons* included a feature story on a photo competition from an October 2017 club trip to Christmas Island, Australia.

In 2018, we contributed to an article in *Southside and the Peak*, part of a family of lifestyle magazines that cater to Hong Kong's upmarket residential neighbourhoods. The story's opening line — “You may not believe it, but Hong Kong actually has a large community of divers.”— provides a good idea of both local conditions and people's reaction when you suggest diving in Hong Kong.

### Photo Policy

One of the most time consuming aspects of the *Southside* article was finding suitable images to accompany the story. Our club has many talented photographers and we've collected thousands of images over the past four decades. But those photos vary greatly in quality and often lack

essential information, such as the name of the photographer, and the date, location, and subject of the image. This made it a challenge to find high-resolution images that were shot recently in Hong Kong, credit the correct photographer, and ensure we had his or her permission to use the image.



# General Activities

## 5.3 Publicity

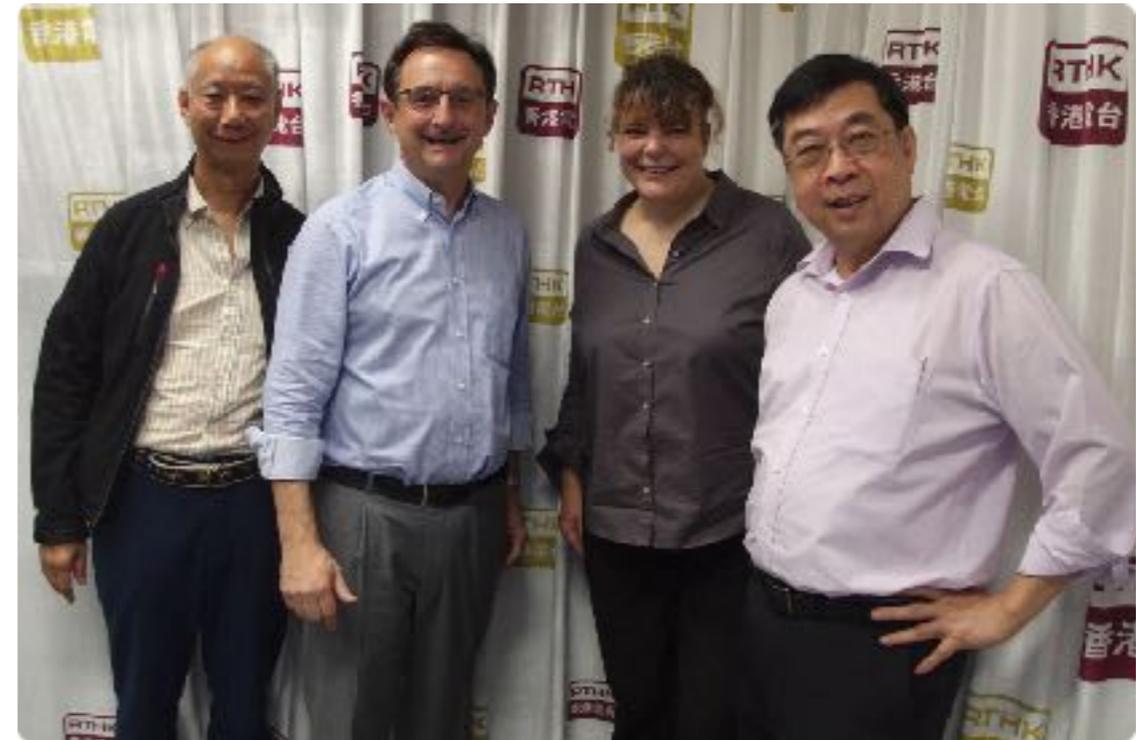
In response, we created a club photo policy, which is intended create a photo archiving system that:

- Is easy to use
- Protects the rights of and recognises the contribution of our photographers
- Ensures the SCDC gets the maximum promotional value from its photos
- Documents our activities and members, as well as Hong Kong's marine environment

Introduced in 2019, the photo policy covers ownership and usage rights under the Creative Commons licensing scheme; explains the basics of local privacy laws; and provides technical, labelling, and subject matter guidelines.

### 40th Anniversary Publicity

In preparation for our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019, we contacted reporters at the *South China Morning Post*, Hong Kong's English-language newspaper of record, and Radio Television Hong Kong, the local equivalent of the BBC. We're very pleased to be busy with these organisations as



both outlets are interested in covering our anniversary which will provide an unprecedented amount of coverage for the club.

For the full articles discussed in this section see:

Horizon: [https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/c79f09\\_81b2d0923aa74f359bd462df49b05088.pdf](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/c79f09_81b2d0923aa74f359bd462df49b05088.pdf)

Southside: [https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/c79f09\\_dd9e624384f34ba6a09f79363d030681.pdf](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/c79f09_dd9e624384f34ba6a09f79363d030681.pdf)

# General Activities

## 5.4 Inter-Branch Liaison

The presence of BSAC in Hong Kong has changed greatly over the years. Previous sister clubs included the Hong Kong Underwater Club and Y Dive.

The Hong Kong Underwater Club was the first diving club setup in Asia. It was established in 1954 and predated BSAC itself. They are a Special Branch of BSAC and their members have diving qualifications from various different agencies without the requirement to crossover and become a BSAC diver. Like SCDC, they regularly chartered large comfortable junks and for many years SCDC and the Underwater Club enjoyed joined dives together, taking turns being the host club.

Y Dive was so named since it was established in the YMCA. Spurning the idea of chartering large comfortable junks, the Y Dive we're good old-fashioned hardcore BSAC divers, running two small boats out of Tai Mei Tuk and organising their dive trips more on the spur of the moment with a very close eye on the weather forecast.

All three clubs enjoyed a very harmonious if slightly competitive relationship and came together on numerous occasions for joint training events. A particular highlight was the joint dive held on 1 July 1997, on Hong Kong handover day, that was named the 'Last Dive of the Empire'. The event proved so popular that the joint dive became a tradition and continued for many years.



# General Activities

## 5.4 Inter-Branch Liaison

Unfortunately, Y Dive hung up their fins in 2009 and the Underwater Club have dived a lot less frequently in recent years, leaving SCDC to carry the mantle of BSAC diving in Hong Kong.

Inter-branch liaison is certainly more of a challenge out here in Asia, but there are still opportunities around. In the past SCDC has teamed up with Free Flow Divers from Singapore, to run a First Class Diver event in Subic Bay in the Philippines. Two National Instructors, John Kermode and Dave Wakelam were allocated the arduous job of flying to the Philippines and diving and water around 28 degrees with a smattering of wrecks to investigate. The event proved a great success resulting in three new shiny First Class Divers and helping to strengthen the links between BSAC in Singapore and Hong Kong.

Other inter-branch events in the Philippines have included technical training such as Sports Mixed Gas and Explorer Mixed Gas under the leadership of Steve Pearson in Puerto Galera on northern Mindoro. This has included divers from SCDC as well as Sydney and Brisbane in Australia.



# Special Achievements

6.1 Coming of Age: Our 40th Anniversary

6.2 Finding an Unexploded Shell



# Special Achievements

## 6.1 Coming of Age: Our 40th Anniversary

In a very fast moving world and in Hong Kong's rich recent history, 40 years can be very impressive number for many new members like me. Founded in 1979, generations of committee members have served their term to promote diving in Hong Kong waters, despite the limited resources available locally. Luckily, they have been well supported by the members.

A typical conversation goes like: "What's the diving like in Hong Kong?" Then you will most likely hear, "Well, the viz is variable, sometimes it's great and sometimes you can't see your fins! But it's always fun with SCDC!".

Low visibility and occasionally not-so-impressive underwater scenery did not stop SCDC divers from the past 40 years from actively participating in our training and weekend club dives for the simplest reason: their shared passion for diving.

When Hong Kong was handed over from the UK to China in 1997, SCDC commemorated this historic occasion with a dive which has come to be known as 'The Last Dive of the

Empire'. At SCDC's 25th anniversary, we celebrated with a series of dives, parties and overseas expeditions to the Philippines and Palau. And then for BSAC's 50th anniversary, we had 50 divers diving for 50 minutes each on a special expedition. So we know we have to do something great to celebrate SCDC's big 4-0 too.



# Special Achievements

## 6.1 Coming of Age: Our 40th Anniversary

*So, what's the plan for a celebration?*

We spent a lot of time planning the celebrations in 2018 and quickly realised we can make things really complicated and eye-catching by involving media and renting a grand gala hall to impress our peer communities and clubs. But that didn't feel right. First of all, it should always involve diving. 40 divers for 40th anniversary, pretty self-explanatory, right? What if we mark the divers with year they joined the club? Which pair of buddies you ran into in the water, and what goes in your thoughts when you see a diver who joined 2 month ago, versus a diver who joined in 1986?

Secondly, we want something that's special but also intimate among club members and their families who have been supporting the club throughout their diving career. On May 24th in downtown Hong Kong, we will host a cocktail event in the Foreign Correspondents Club, which is known for great hospitality and a warm and welcoming vibe. Current members, honourable alumni, families and friends will get together and celebrate our clubs first four decades.



Thirdly, we are planning overseas club dives. With a two-hour flight to Cebu, the Philippines, plus an hour by car, we can be at Lapu-Lapu. The ease of accessibility to the location and the blue-water diving are sure to make this a popular trip. What could be a more fitting way to celebrate?

# Special Achievements

## 6.1 Coming of Age: Our 40th Anniversary

Last but not least our new club logo, that's been a huge hit since it's launch, is definitely t-shirt and hat worthy! It is time to create a new batch of swag for our members, that's practical yet memorable.

Our 40th anniversary is a year for old and new members to join together and create new memories. It promises to be a fun period for SCDC and we're really looking forward to the celebrations to come.



# Special Achievements

## *6.2 Finding an Unexploded Shell*

On one of the rare summer weekends without a scheduled SCDC dive, Cath Wan and I joined a local operator, Splash Hong Kong, for a day's fun diving. Splash do a great job at promoting local diving in Hong Kong and often have a good mix of students and fun divers on their boat. This day was no exception and we headed out of Sai Kung towards Bluff Island, a tried-and-tested favourite dive spot that is suitable for all levels of diver.

It was the weekend after the category 5 typhoon 'Mangkhut' had hit Hong Kong, the strongest storm on record to hit the city but it was a sunny day and the visibility underwater was good - a whopping 8m or so. Not bad for Hong Kong waters in summer and surprising given the carnage still evident all around the territory.

Unfortunately, the part of the dive site we chose to explore was less inspiring. We headed north east across the shallow bay, desperately searching the sandy-rubble bottom for anything of interest. Let's face it, it was dull. Our buddy team had been extended to include a visiting instructor from

Germany, Rene, and I was leading. I was starting to give up hope when I spotted something undeniably man-made sitting on the bottom. I decided to get a closer look, fully expecting to retrieve a plastic souvenir to take back to the boat. It was quite a shock when it slowly dawned on us what we'd actually stumbled across.



# Special Achievements

## *6.2 Finding an Unexploded Shell*

I racked my brain to think of the hand signal for bomb, not one of the standard ones we teach in Ocean Diver, or Sports Diver for that matter! I opted for some frantic hand waving and the danger signal. Cath and Rene got the message. To be fair, the fact that I had identified that this was some form of artillery meant that even a 3 year old could probably manage it without the help of my dubious hand signals.

In hindsight, we probably should have marked the spot with a DSMB, but we were only 15 minutes into the dive and hadn't completely given up hope of finding something interesting (bombs aside of course). We continued on. Indeed, we did find more things of interest... a pair of sunglasses and a fishing rod. The looks on the faces of the Splash instructors were quite something as I surfaced at the back of the boat wearing the sunnies and holding the fishing rod aloft. But they were nothing compared to the ones when Cath told them what else we'd found!

Then came a dilemma. This was the first of two dives that day. Do we call this in now, knowing we'll be forfeiting the

second dive, or jump in quick and call later? We did the latter, obviously, but with very strict instructions to all divers to remain to the South of the boat. But we did call the owner of Splash, Darren, to report the findings.

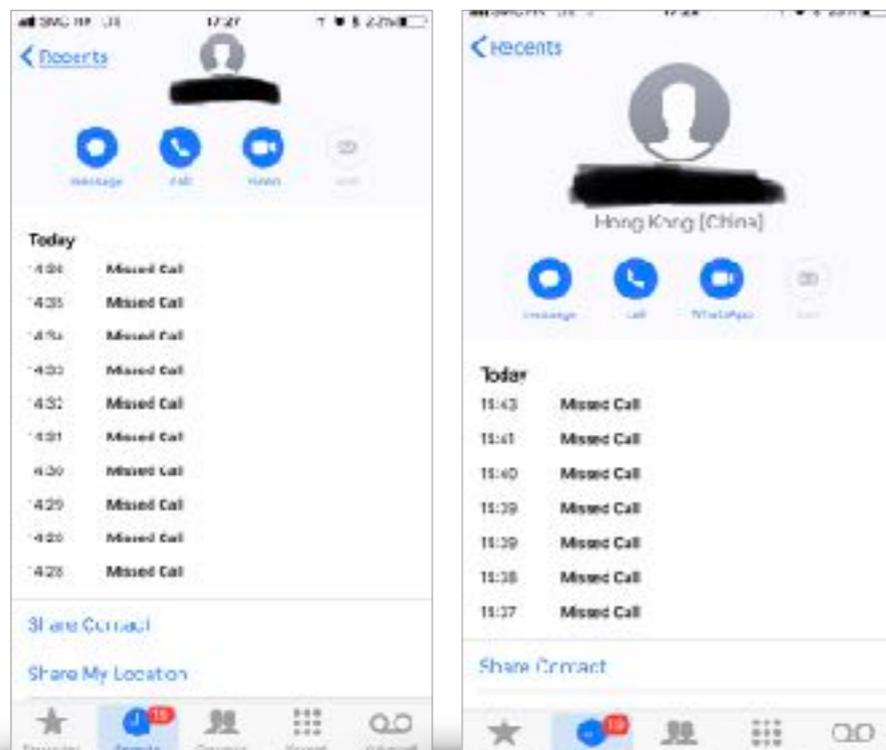
By the time we surfaced from the second dive, Darren had contacted the marine police to alert them of the suspicious object. No less than four boats had been launched and we were about to be boarded by some very serious looking chaps that could have walked straight off the set of a Bond movie.



# Special Achievements

## 6.2 Finding an Unexploded Shell

When I checked my phone later, I had 19 missed calls from an unknown number which turned out to be the police operations centre. It seemed they'd been trying to get hold of us. Oops.



Next followed a minor interrogation. What's your name? Where do you live? What's your ID number? Phone number? What did it look like? How big is it? (My timely quip of 'That's what she said' didn't even get so much of a smirk!) Where is it? Did anyone else see it? Cath - What's your

name? Where do you live?... We had several rounds of this. Presumably so the police had backups of our data - better safe than sorry! Then the super cool looking dive team arrived on a speedboat. We pointed out where we'd been diving and were then told to leave the area immediately so the guys could get on with their work. We headed back to Sai Kung with the boat buzzing from the day's excitement. If only we'd taken our cameras.

The next day was a Monday and I was back in the office. After amusing a few co-workers with the tale of our weekend antics and a doing a little research to determine what we'd found was actually an unexploded shell, I'd put the whole matter out of my mind and settled in to the daily grind. Then my phone rang, an unidentified number. Not so unusual and I answered somewhat absent mindedly expecting yet another sales call. 'Hello, Maddy speaking.' 'Hello Miss Prow, this is the marine police. We'd like to request your assistance with the bom... errr *suspicious object* you found yesterday'.

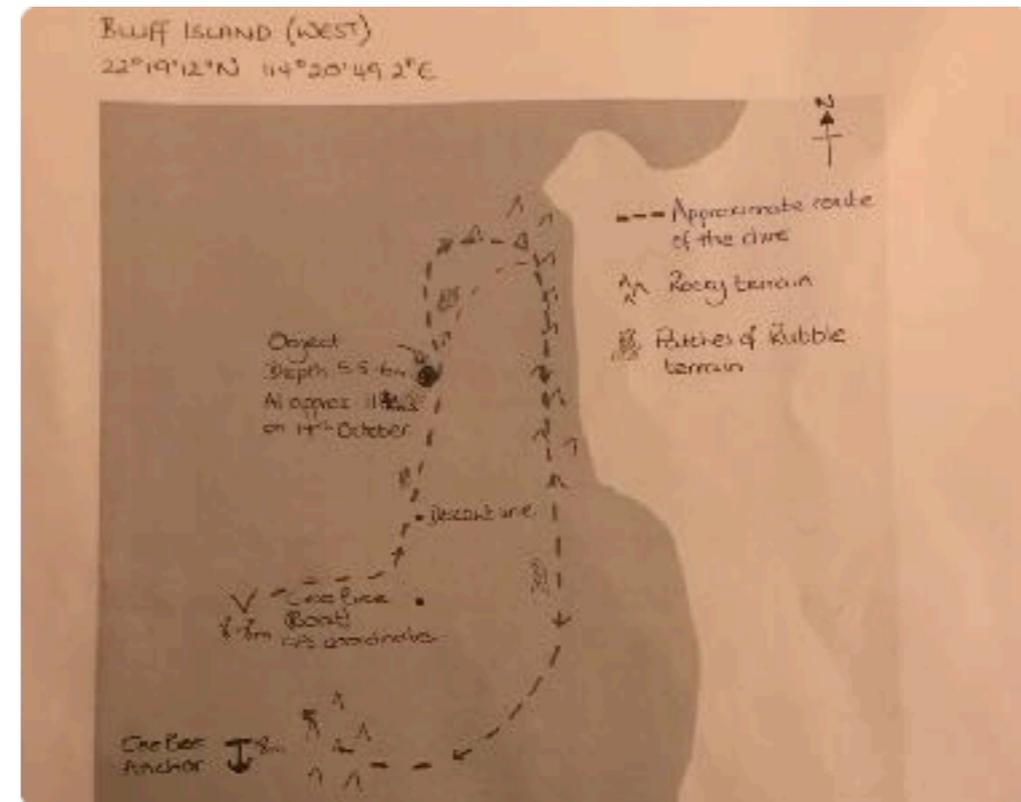
# Special Achievements

## 6.2 Finding an Unexploded Shell

Well that got my attention!

It turns out, the team had been unable to locate the shell the previous afternoon and they wanted me to go out on the boat with them and point out the area we were diving in. I agreed to go to the police base the following morning and then set about sending the best email I'll probably ever get to write to a boss to request the morning off. Permission granted.

I suspected the divers had been searching the wrong area, our boat had swung on its anchor by the time the divers showed up and I think that message got lost in translation, even with a ridiculous amount of arm waving in an attempt to explain this. So I set to work drawing a site map with an X to mark the spot (and even though I say so myself, it was pretty good compared to my usual scribbles!). I produced this during the briefing the next morning, to nods of approval from the team leader. Then, with an exciting swiftness, was whisked on to one of the armoured cruisers and off we sped to Bluff Island. My job was to point at the spot where the



'object' was found. Even though it was underwater... hmmm, I made no promises and pointed out I wasn't allowed to dive which undoubtedly limited my ability to find the exact spot! It was fascinating to see how the team prepared for their dives. The speed and efficiency with which they deployed a shot line and a jackstay was impressive. And funnily enough, it turns out the pros really do wear Scubapro! The boat I was on patrolled the bay, protecting the divers from the boats of curious fisherman while they conducted their search. But they didn't find it.

# Special Achievements

## 6.2 Finding an Unexploded Shell



And it was hard not to take offence at the thinly disguised annoyance and scepticism in the team leader's voice as he told me the alleged object had not been found despite them searching the entire bay before being dumped, unceremoniously, back at base and left to find my own way home.

The next day was a holiday in Hong Kong and I stopped by the Splash office to catch up with the team there and fill them in about the morning's events. Darren, being the true gent he is, was keen to restore my honour and suggested

we go back to locate the shell. I'm sure there was another motive too, what guy can resist the possibility of finding a bomb? After a short reflection, Darren reconsidered given there would be guests on the boat the following day so I agreed to guide for him instead (under strict instructions not to find any more problematic objects) and we'd take the boat out the following morning with some of the other Splash instructors.

It was a fun couple of days, and it seemed I'd given Darren further confirmation that his nickname for me, 'Trouble' was appropriate, he's now come up with several others too. We agreed a search strategy, consisting of Darren paying out a 50m jackstay, whilst the four of us spread out along an adjacent line to the left, to cover as wide an area as possible. We'd then switch sides on the return leg. And this time, we'd deploy a marker if we found anything.

It didn't take long. In under 10 minutes we'd found it. And I'd learnt my lesson. This time I had my trusty compact camera with me. Click, click, click.

# Special Achievements

## 6.2 Finding an Unexploded Shell

DSMB deployed and secured (not on the shell, obviously) and we headed back to the boat. I have to admit, it was pretty satisfying making that call to the marine police. Before long, the boats were back, we pointed out the DSMB and answered the now familiar questions, what's your name and where do you come from? But this time we had photographic evidence to show the divers what they were looking for. It's amazing how many police men and women now have my phone number because they wanted me to send them the photos! The dive team showed up and we went on our way, having day jobs to get back to and all that. I was told that they'd locate the object and then bring in their ammunitions experts to safely dispose of it but as is normal in these situations, we never really found out what happened. But we do know it's not there now.

So there you have it. The story about how two SCDC divers managed to turn a regular Sunday fun dive into something quite extraordinary. I'd like to say that we helped keep the Hong Kong public safe from an unexploded shell that had lay undiscovered since the war until it was dredged up by

the typhoon. But it's equally as possible that the typhoon actually dredged up a practice shell that had missed its rather large target of Bluff Island from the days when the British Navy used the area for shooting practice. Either way, it makes a good story for entertaining new members at our club nights. And it's not the first time a buddy team have found unexploded munitions either. Mike and Cath C also took a trip out with the marine police some years ago. Now the race is on between members for who'll be next to hitch a ride in an armoured cruiser....





# Appendix

# Appendix 1

## 2018 Dive Log

Day	Date	Boat	Dive Site	GPS Location	Number of Divers	Number of Dives	DM
Sat	20 Jan 2018	Shore Dive	Artillery Ramp	22.309492N, 114.301308E	6	12	Chris Roberts
Sat	27 Jan 2018	Kidusi	Nine Pins	22.258665N, 114.350600E	4	8	Rob Christie
Sun	4 Mar 2018	Island Junks	Po Toi	22.175213N, 114.272469E	7	14	Mike Belshaw
Sat	10 Mar 2018	Diving Adventure	Trio Island	22.301086N, 114.318398E	7	13	Andy Niven
Sun	18 Mar 2018	Speed Boat	Kung Chau and Port Island	22.482434N, 114.371030E and 22.504942N, 114.364749E	4	8	Alex Grioni
Sun	15 Apr 2018	Diving Adventure	Long Kei Wan	22.371588N, 114.382037E	15	30	Paul Bayne
Sat	28 Apr 2018	Diving Adventure	Wang Chau	22°19'56.3"N 114°22'20.1"E	8	16	Alex Grioni
Sat	12 May 2018	Diving Adventure	Whisky Bay	22.370754N, 114.322143E	12	24	Alex Grioni
Sun	3 Jun 2018	Island Junks	Mat Chau, Po Toi Island	22.161196N, 114.249736E	16	32	Chris Roberts
Fri - Mon	15-18 Jun 2018	Broadwalk Divers	Subic Bay Philippines	14.820877N, 120.256789E ...	12	24	Catheryn Chu
Sun	24 Jun 2018	Speed Boat	Long Harbour	22.447048N, 114.351286E	10	20	Catheryn Chu
Sun	8 Jul 2018	Diving Adventure	Pak Lap	22.349047N, 114.360211E	18	31	Paul Bayne
Sat	14 Jul 2018	Diving Adventure	Jin Island	22.330834N, 114.316563E	12	24	David Ng

# Appendix 1

## 2018 Dive Log

Day	Date	Boat	Dive Site	GPS Location	Number of Divers	Number of Dives	DM
Sun	22 Jul 2018	Kidusi	Dollos at High Island Reservoir	22.361284N, 114.376591E	10	20	Andy Niven
Sun	29 Jul 2018	Speed Boat	Ngau Shi Wu Wan	22.527138N, 114.280441E	11	22	Alex Gioni
Sun	5 Aug 2018	Island Junks	East of Po Toi	22.174299N, 114.272278E	13	21	Mike Belshaw
Sat	18 Aug 2018	Diving Adventure	Wang Chau	22.332414N, 114.372877E	21	42	Nicola Vogel
Sat	25 Aug 2018	Diving Adventure	Wang Chau	22.332414N, 114.372877E	10	20	Paul Bayne
Sat	1 Sep 2018	Speed Boat	Tung Ping Chau, Round Island & Crooked Island	22.541063N, 114.441799E	10	29	Alex Gioni
Sun	9 Sep 2018	Shore Dive	Little Palm Beach	22.320471N, 114.287379E	7	7	Paul Bayne
Sun	23 Sep 2018	Island Junks	NW of Beaufort Island	22.187909N, 114.242871E	13	24	Paul Bayne
Tues	25 Sep 2018	Diving Adventure	Bluff Island	22.314727N, 114.345624E	4	8	Paul Bayne
Sat	29 Sep 2018	Speed Boat	Kung Chau, Port island, Hoi Ha Wan	22.504693N, 114.364512E	11	33	Alex Gioni
Sat	20 Oct 2018	Diving Adventure	Whisky Bay	22.370754N, 114.322143E	14	28	Chris Roberts
Sat - Sun	3-4 Nov 2018	Diving Adventure	Cascade Bay	Various around Port Shelter	12	39	Mike Belshaw
Sun	25 Nov 2018	Island Junks	NW of Beaufort	22.161306N, 114.250187E	10	18	Catheryn Chu
Sun	16 Dec 2018	Island Junks	Mat Chau, Po Toi	22.161306N, 114.250187E	10	10	Mike Belshaw



We hope you've enjoyed this introduction to the South China Diving Club. We look forward to welcoming you to Hong Kong with a cold beer at the ABC.

Cheers!