

Totnes Sub-aqua Club (TSAC)

Q. Is TSAC affiliated to any organisation?

A. TSAC is both a BSAC (British Sub Aqua Club) branch and a SAA (Sub Aqua Association) club, but we only teach using the BSAC training system. TSAC members are required to also be members of either BSAC or SAA.

Q. What are the advantages of club diving?

A. Diving clubs can provide many benefits, for example:

- Diver training.
- Qualified Instructors, dive leaders and dive organisers.
- A friendly social environment for training, diving and recreation.
- Less expensive diving.
- Free use of the pool during our Wednesday evening “wet” session.
- Fellow divers / buddies to dive with.
- Access to club equipment: boats, compressor, etc. for training and diving.
- Regular Branch meetings, training courses, open water dives and diving holidays with friends.
- Discounts at some of the local dive shops.

Q. What do you mean by a diving club? Is this like dive centres abroad?

A. No, the two are entirely different. If you learnt and are used to diving abroad, or even with some UK dive centres, then you are probably used to simply turning up at the centre and going diving, whereas club diving is more about everybody working together. Clubs are run by volunteers, whereas dive centres have paid staff. However, this doesn't mean that club diving is in any way a poorer alternative, it's just a different way of doing things. Another difference is that most holiday dives are conducted under the supervision of a guide whereas with club dives, the buddy pair is expected to be self sufficient.

Q. How is TSAC run?

A. TSAC is managed by an elected committee of ten members who meet regularly to make major decisions affecting the organization and development of the branch. The committee positions are:

Chair:

The Chairperson is the official “head” of the club in all matters except those related to diving and plays an important role as leader and in the conduct of Branch affairs, in Branch meetings and in all matters relating to the Branch's public image.

Diving Officer:

If appropriately qualified, the Branch Diving Officer will be the lead instructor of a Branch; and can award Ocean Diver, Sports Diver, Dive Leader and Advanced Diver qualifications to members within their own Branch.

The Branch Diving Officer has responsibility for the safety and management of all Branch Diving, and some of the safeguards they can apply to try and ensure that good practices are maintained within the Branch.

The Branch Diving Officer has responsibility for all Branch Training and the need to ensure that training is given to a consistently high standard and in accordance with the current version of the BSAC Instructor Training Manual. This role within TSAC is delegated to the **Training Officer**.

The Branch Diving Officer has responsibility for all Branch Equipment related to diving or training, such as boats, a branch compressor, and including instructional

aids such as resuscitation manikins or overhead projectors. This role within TSAC is delegated to the **Equipment Officer**.

Secretary:

The Secretary looks after communication with the people outside the branch and between the Branch and BSAC/SAA. They have responsibility for organising Committee Meetings and the Branch's General Meetings, taking minutes and for publishing and circulating them to appropriate members.

Treasurer:

The Treasurer looks after the branches finances and plays an important role in predicting income and expenditure, and budgeting for such major purchases - and for their upkeep and eventual replacement. The Branch gets most of the money it needs to run from the membership subscription. These funds are used for the day to day running of the Branch, for such regular expenses as pool and meeting room hire, insurance and in particular for the acquisition of major assets, such as training equipment, new boats, the Shogun, etc.

Social Secretary:

The Social Secretary has responsibility for the Branch Social Calendar and arranges talks, social evenings and the annual Branch Dinner and Dance.

There are also **three non-executive positions** on the committee, which are intended for members who wish to help, but are not yet happy to take on a full executive role, or to address a specific need on the committee.

In addition, there are a couple of positions that are important to the club, but that are not committee posts:

Membership Secretary:

The Membership Secretary has responsibility for taking receipt of both Branch and BSAC/SAA subscriptions and dealing with membership returns to the membership department at BSAC/SAA. The Membership Secretary also maintains the membership database and the club address lists.

Welfare Officer:

The Welfare Officer has responsibility for the Branch Welfare of the Vulnerable Policy and acts as a first point of contact should a complaint or concern be raised in respect of this Policy.

Q. How is TSAC financed?

A. The club is run financially by annual fees from its members as well as numerous fund raising events through the year.

Q. How long has TSAC been running?

A. The Totnes Branch of the British Sub-Aqua Club was formed in 1973.

Q. How many members does TSAC have?

A. TSAC currently has almost 100 members.

Q. Do I have to live in Totnes to join TSAC?

A. No. We currently have members living in Plymouth, Newton Abbot, Torbay, Exeter, Dartmouth, on Dartmoor, in Cornwall and even one near Sheffield.

Q. Where do you meet?

A. The branch has a "wet" session at Totnes Leisure Pool at 8.00 pm on a Wednesday evening, where members and their families are welcome to come and swim, snorkel or to practice their diving skills (the pool is free to TSAC members, but families pay a small fee to cover pool costs). This is followed by a "dry" meeting in the upstairs bar at the Meadowbrook Community Centre, Dartington, from around 9.00 pm onwards, for a social get together and to plan the following week's diving.

Q. Are new members welcome?

A. New members are always welcome, whether you are a complete beginner who wants to learn to dive or an experienced diver who would like to join a club that does lots of varied and interesting diving.

Q. Do you train people to dive?

A. The branch runs regular training courses, both for those learning to dive and for more experienced divers wishing to increase their skills, such as boat handling and lifesaving or to gain higher qualifications, either using our own instructors or in conjunction with other local clubs.

Q. How do you differ from other local dive clubs?

A. The club gained national recognition from the BSAC in 1994 when it was awarded the Heinke Trophy. This Trophy is awarded annually to the branch judged to have done most to further the interests of its members and the BSAC and is hotly contested. We were also the runners-up for the BSAC/Diver Spotlight Award in 1998 and the Heinke Trophy in 1999. We won the Heinke Trophy again in 2006 and to cap that one of our members (Richard Handy) won the Wilkinson Sword trophy for his performance in the National Instructor exam.

Q. What's the diving like in Devon?

A. South Devon is undoubtedly one of the places to live if you are a diver, with enthusiasts from all over the UK coming to the West Country every year just to dive off our coast. Underwater visibility can be as good as 20-30 metres and the water abounds with colourful marine life. The area has as much to offer underwater as it does on land, with spectacular underwater scenery and many local shipwrecks to be visited. Diving is organised throughout the year at sites all over South Devon, visiting wrecks like the Scylla, the Persier, the Maine and the James Egan Layne; or more scenic dives such as Hilsea Point, the East Rutts and the famous Eddystone Reef.

Q. Do you organise trips away and holidays?

A. There are regular trips to Cornwall and expeditions to such places as Lundy Island, Newquay, Portland, the Scillies, Scotland, Pembroke, and the Channel Islands, plus club holidays to more exotic locations such as the Red Sea and the Maldives.

Q. What equipment do you have?

A. The branch owns two boats (RIBS), each fully equipped with radio, echo sounder, electronic navigation and safety equipment. These are kept in a purpose built boatshed, which also houses our 4WD vehicle and compressor.

Q. Do you also have social events?

A. Yes, we have a regular programme of talks from invited speakers, an annual Dinner and Dance, and other social events.

Q. Is there a training programme?

A. No, Branch training is arranged by the Training Officer to suit demand.

Q. Do you organise hardboat diving?

A. Yes. There are regular Tuesday evening hardboat dives from Dartmouth during the summer, plus occasional expeditions away.

Q. Do you organise shore diving?

A. Yes, both for training and to suit demand.

Q. Do you do student membership?

A. No, TSAC do not offer this, although student membership of BSAC is available.

Q. Why do I need to join BSAC/SAA?

A. It is a requirement of the branch that all members are members of either BSAC or SAA. This ensures that both the individual member and the branch are protected by insurance in the event that an incident should occur. It is not sufficient for the member to simply have their own insurance, as this will not provide the branch with the necessary protection.

Q. Do you provide diving equipment (or can I rent equipment from the Club)?

A. No, you need to have your own dive kit, other than during basic training.

Q. How much does it cost to use the pool?

A. The pool is free to club members. Family members can also use the pool at a cost of £2 per session.

Q. How much is the diving?

A. Diving from the branch RIBs costs £10 per dive (dive tickets are available from the Treasurer every Wednesday evening), although this varies slightly for expeditions away to places like Cornwall. If the club arranges hardboat dives the cost is based on an equal division of the total cost between those present. However, if you have booked on a hardboat dive and fail to turn-up, you will be expected to pay your share. There is no cost for shore dives, other than incidental costs such as parking.

Q. I hear that I get free diving if I tow the boat. Is this correct?

A. Yes, if you use your own vehicle. However, if you only tow one way and someone else tows back, you only get a 50% reduction.

Q. How much does it cost to join?

A. Current (2009) membership rates are set-out below. It is necessary for branch members to also be members of either BSAC or SAA and also to join Meadowbrook Community Centre. These costs are also set-out below.

TSAC Membership

Totnes full membership	£114.00#
Totnes reduced membership	£50.00*
Totnes snorkelling membership	£10.00

BSAC Membership

BSAC full membership.	£50.00
BSAC full membership (AD/CI/OWI).	£45.00
BSAC full membership (AI/First Class Diver)	£40.00
BSAC full membership (NI)	£30.00
BSAC abated membership	£35.00

BSAC full snorkelling membership . £50.00

SAA full membership. .£35.00 (renewal – add £10 if new member, plus £30 for student pack if below club diver qualification)

Meadowbrook Community Centre

Full membership	£13.50
Senior citizens and juniors	£7.00
Joining fee	£5.00

Q. Can I pay by standing order?

A. Yes, you can pay your TSAC membership by standing order – this is currently set at £9.00 per month. However, BSAC and SAA membership cannot be paid by standing order, as we have to pass subscription monies on, in full, each month/year. Please ask the Membership Secretary or Treasurer for a standing order mandate.

Q. Can I pay by credit card?

A. No, we do not accept credit or debit cards

Q. What is reduced TSAC membership?

A. Reduced membership entitles you to a maximum of 6 boat dives per year, including expeditions using the club boats. If this is exceeded the balance of full membership becomes payable.

Q. What is abated BSAC membership?

A. Abated membership is available where two full diving members reside at the same address and only one magazine is required - there is a reduction in the subscription due for the second member, e.g. husband and wife, etc.

Q. Is there anything for my family to do when I go diving?

A. We do organise some beach based family days during the summer, and some club holidays are suitable for families/partners.

Q. What's the difference between the Diving Officer and the Dive Manager?

A. The Diving Officer is responsible for all diving related activities in the club, whilst the Dive Manager looks after a specific day's diving, or diving expedition.

Q. How do I book on dives?

A. The procedure for booking onto club dives is set-out below:

- A branch dive programme is published every year on the branch website and also on the notice board. This details the diving that is planned and, usually, who will be organising (managing) the dive. However, this can be subject to change and other dives can also be added.
- Try to be at the club on Wednesday evening where details of forthcoming diving will be announced.
- Put your name, qualification, whether you can tow and any special requests on the appropriate dive list posted on the notice board.
- Make a note of the Dive Manager's telephone number, time to phone and any other relevant details.
- The club email will contain details of the next week's diving. If you haven't been able to be at the clubhouse on Wednesday then you can still phone or email the Dive Manager to add your name to the list – provided you do it early. Don't leave it till the last minute because you may be disappointed.
- Ring the Dive Manager at the appointed call-in time to find out whether the dive

- is on or not, where you have to be and when you have to be there.
- If your name is on the list then it is imperative that, whether you wish to dive or not, you phone the Dive Manager at the appointed time before the dive. If you cannot dive please let the Dive Manager know as soon as possible.

Q. Can you do air fills?

A. Yes, we have our own compressor and air fills are available from the boat shed every Wednesday evening until 9.15 p.m.

Q. How much are air fills?

A. Air tickets can be purchased from the Treasurer and are priced £2.25 each, or £10.00 for 5, for a standard 12l cylinder. The cost of fills for non-standard cylinders is set-out below:

- Up to 3 L (pony cylinders) **£1.00** – cash
- >3 L & up to 15 L **£2.25** (normal rate) – token or cash
- More than 15 L **£3.25** (i.e. normal rate plus £1) – token + £1
- Twinsets of more than 15 L (combined volume) & not manifolded will be treated as 2 cylinders (i.e. **2 × £2.25** payable) – 2 tokens
- Twinsets of more than 15 L (combined vol.) & manifolded will be charged at 15 L rate (i.e. **£3.25**) – token + £1

Q. Can you supply nitrox?

A. Yes, by prior arrangement. There is a nitrox rota and you will need to contact the duty gas blender to find out which night he/she is filling nitrox.

Q. How much are nitrox fills?

A. The cost of nitrox fills is calculated based on the amount of oxygen required to achieve the desired mix, plus the cost of an air fill. Oxygen is currently charged at 1p per litre of “free” oxygen.

Q. Can I arrange my own dives?

A. Yes, provided you are a BSAC Dive Leader you can manage a club dive. However, club rules state that a club dive using club equipment (i.e. boats) should have at least 4 club members present, one of whom must be an Advanced Diver. Anyone managing a club dive must obtain the Diving Officer’s agreement to the planned dive and to the use of club equipment.

Q. Am I expected to help?

A. Yes, but this can be by helping at the boat shed, launching and retrieving boats, refuelling, towing, etc, or by offering to assist with the running of a social function, running a raffle, or whatever suits you best.

Q. Can I use Trimix on branch dives:

A. Yes, mixed gases are allowed on club dives, but members must satisfy the Branch Diving Officer that they hold the relevant and recognized qualifications for their use. All diving to be carried out in accordance with the latest recommendations from BSAC’s National Diving Committee.

Q. Can I drive the branch boats?

A. An approved boat handler must be present in the boat at all times, and only persons having undertaken a recognized boat handling course and subsequently satisfied the Branch Diving Officer of their competence may handle the boat unsupervised.

Q. What depth can I dive to?

A. The depth limitations applicable to branch dives are set-out below:

1. "Trainees for Ocean Diver:- no deeper than their previous training dive, unless on a training dive. Maximum depth 20 metres.
2. Club/Ocean Divers and PADI Open Water divers:- Maximum 20 metres limited to no stop diving.
3. Under BSAC rules a PADI Advanced Open Water diver can dive to 30m if they are paired with a BSAC Dive Leader or equivalent. If they are buddied with a Sports Diver, Ocean Diver or another PADI AOW the maximum depth they can go to is 20 m. The PADI 'Deep Diving' qualification is not recognised by BSAC.
4. Sports Divers (no matter how experienced):- Maximum 35 metres.
5. For diving deeper than 30 metres, divers should have done at least five recent dives deeper than 20 metres.
6. For dives in excess of 50m, mixed gas or Trimix should be used and BSAC currently recommends a maximum depth of 80m. All diving to be carried out in accordance with the latest recommendations from BSAC's National Diving Committee.

Q. Do you service equipment?

A. No, but we know people who can.

Q. What sort of diving do you do?

A. The club carries out a wide range of diving from shallow reef dives through to deep wreck dives. Many divers dive for the pleasure of experiencing the underwater realm, but there are many other hobbies to pursue. For example:

- Underwater photography
- Underwater archaeology
- Wreck exploration
- Marine ecology and conservation

There are a number of club members interested in wreck exploration, underwater still photography and video photography. We also have a number of technical divers in the club using trimix and rebreathers

Q. How old do I have to be (or am I too old) to join?

A. The minimum age we will accept someone for training or diving is 14. However, for 14-17 year olds we do require that a parent or guardian is also a diver and is present during all training and diving. At the other end of the scale, one is rarely too old to start scuba diving there are many active divers in their 70s in the UK.

BSAC and SAA Membership

Q. What is BSAC?

A. The British Sub-aqua Club (BSAC) was established as a club for divers and this ethos remains today. Our structure means that we are run by divers for divers and, as a not-for-profit organisation, BSAC invests back into the club, for its members and the development of diving. BSAC's organisational structure consists of the BSAC Council, National Diving Committee and Regional Coaching Network, as well as the central HQ administrative team. All BSAC Council members and officers are elected from our membership.

With more than 1,100 clubs and branches around the UK and overseas, BSAC's club structure is what makes us unique and ensures that diving remains an accessible and affordable sport for all. All our clubs are run by dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers, allowing our members to directly participate in the growth and development of both their own club and BSAC as a whole.

Q. What is SAA?

A. The Sub Aqua Association (SAA) is an association of independent dive clubs. SAA member clubs maintain their independence while maintaining the national standards of the SAA and benefiting from regional and national support.

Q. Why do I need to join BSAC/SAA?

A. It is a requirement of the branch that all members are members of either BSAC or SAA. This ensures that both the individual member and the branch are protected by insurance in the event that an incident should occur. It is not sufficient for the member to simply have their own insurance, as this will not provide the branch with the necessary protection.

Q. What do I get for my BSAC membership?

A. As a member of BSAC you get the following benefits:

- A 'Welcome to BSAC' pack (new members only).
- 12 monthly copies of 'BSAC DIVE' magazine, the journal of BSAC.
- Third Party Liability Insurance.
- Access to all other BSAC member services:
 - BSAC coaching scheme
 - Regionally run skill development courses (SDCs)
 - Instructor training scheme
 - BSAC information services – BSAC website, BSAC Talk, etc
 - Discounts on dive holidays, insurance, etc

Q. What do I get with SAA membership?

A. SAA membership provides Third Party Public and Products Liability Insurance for up to £5 million, including member to member liability. In addition, SAA membership includes Personal Accident cover of up to £10,000.

Q. What is needed to prove I am a student?

A. If you are a new or renewing student member and over 23 then you must support your application for membership with proof of your student status. This proof can be a copy of a library card, student registration card or a copy of your council tax exemption certificate. We cannot accept NUS cards as proof of student status.

Q. What is Third Party Insurance for?

A. Third Party sometimes called "Public Liability" Insurance is in place for up to £10m (£5m with SAA) for civil liability compensation awards for personal injury to Third Parties or Members of the Public or damage to their property as a result of negligence by any BSAC Member. Additionally the cover includes up to £10m for civil liability pursued against Principals to BSAC i.e. Swimming Pools, Leisure Centres, Land Owners and Lake or Pit Owners that allow BSAC organised diving to take place on or in their property. The cover this year also includes up to £100,000 of Criminal Defence costs as a result of criminal action being taken against an insured for death or injury of a Third Party, damage or destruction to their property.

Q. When does my insurance cover commence?

A. Third Party Liability Insurance cover starts when an application form is fully completed by the applicant and Branch not when the application reaches BSAC .

Q. Do I have a choice between full membership that includes the magazine and one that doesn't?

A. No, BSAC consider that all full diving members should have the magazine as part of their membership to enable them to be kept up to date with what is happening within the ever changing diving world and the BSAC in general. However, you can chose whether to have a paper copy of BSAC Dive, or an electronic version – iDive. SAA membership does not include a magazine.

Q. When am I covered by BSAC insurance?

A. All BSAC members are covered when engaged on club activities and when they are diving anywhere in the world, excluding liability for incidents within USA/Canada territories.

Q. Am I covered on Dives arranged outside of Club Dives?

A. Yes, provided you follow the BSAC's Diving Guidelines.

Q. Does the insurance include the use of Nitrox, Rebreathers and Trimix?

A. Yes, where they are being used in accordance with BSAC recommendations.

Q. What happens when I am abroad and diving on holiday with other organisations at either a Dive Centre at a Hotel, or an Independent Dive School at Resort?

A. Your BSAC member liability insurance still covers you, but if you are going to engage in speciality diving that is outside of BSAC recommendations, you should check with BSAC Headquarters and their Insurance Advisors that the activity can be included in the member liability cover.

Q. Can one BSAC member claim personal injury or damage to property caused by another BSAC member?

A. Yes, if it's as a result of negligence and results in a legal claim, this is called "Member to Member Liability" and is stated in the policy.

Q. Will BSAC Liability Insurance pay claims if I am injured or lose or damage my diving equipment if no one is to blame?

A. No. BSAC's annual Liability insurance is not an "Accident", "Travel" or "Dive Equipment" Insurance. You should insure these risks yourself with an appropriate insurer

Medical Issues

Q. How do I know if I'm medically fit enough to dive?

A. All BSAC and SAA clubs are required to get prospective members to complete a Self-Declaration Medical Form before joining. The form highlights any issues that may preclude you from diving.

Q. If I answer 'Yes' to any of the questions on the form, what do I do and who do I do speak to if I am unsure about whether an illness in the past will stop me diving?

A. The first thing to do is to telephone your local Medical Referee. Medical Referees are listed on the reverse of the Self-Declaration Form or you can check the UK Sports Diving Medical Committee's website or the BSAC website for the most up-to-date list of Referees.

From your initial telephone enquiry and the information you give to a Medical Referee they may:

- Say you can complete the self-declaration yourself.
- Need to contact your own doctor for further information and on this result, may endorse your self-declaration form. All this will involve is sending the Self-Declaration form to the Referee with a stamped addressed envelope for return of the endorsed form to you. There may be a charge for this.
- Require you to visit them for a medical examination before a Certificate of Fitness to dive can be issued. There will be a charge for this.

Q. If I answer 'Yes' to any of the questions on the form, will I then have to contact a Medical Referee every year?

A. The first thing to do is to telephone your local Medical Referee. Following the outcome of this consultation the Medical Referee will either indicate that in the future you can complete the self-declaration without further consultation unless there is a change in your health, or that you do not need to consult again for a specified period of time or you may have to see the Referee on an annual basis. The periods and frequency will be judged by the Referee in the light of the underlying condition.

Q. What happens if a diver signs the Medical Self-Declaration Form stating that all is OK, but is hiding a past illness?

A. The Form is a legal declaration. If a diver is found to have been untruthful and an accident occurs then that diver will be uninsured and may be held individually liable for the consequences.

Q. What if I have had DCI but been cleared to dive? Or What if I have a condition listed on the Medical Self-Declaration Form but have been cleared to dive by a Medical Referee?

A. The Medical Referee will have issued you with a Certificate of Fitness to Dive. This certificate may cover a certain time period or be a clearance that self-declaration can be completed by the diver for the future. Provided the Medical Referee has given you the all clear, then there will not be a problem.

Q. Supposing different advice has been given from another medical source compared to a Medical Referee? Who do I go to seek advice or clarification?

A. The UK Sport Diving Medical Committee is the final court of appeal for divers, and Referees are able to refer to the committee for advice.

Q. What happens if I have a Diving Related Illness after filling in the Self-Declaration Form?

A. Any member who suffers a decompression-related illness (DCI, Burst Lung, etc.) must be declared fit by a Medical Referee.

Q. What happens when I travel abroad and need a medical to dive?

A. If diving abroad, please note a full diving medical may be required. Medical Form B can be obtained from BSAC HQ and taken to the doctor conducting the examination.

Q. How long is the Medical Self-Certification Form valid for?

A. The self-declaration is valid for one year, unless there is a significant change in your health. For ease of administration both BSAC and SAA have tied the self-declaration in with the annual Membership renewals and so Members should complete the self-declaration at the time they renew. New members would complete the self-declaration at the time they join BSAC/SAA and then at subsequent renewals.

Q. Can I choose to have a Medical with my GP instead of Self-Declaration?

A. The requirement to meet the BSAC Medical Fitness to Dive is for completion of a Medical Self-Declaration. Whilst you may choose to have a Medical anyway this does not replace the self-declaration process.

Q. Can the Diving Officer request a fitness test?

A. Yes the D.O. can carry out a simple test in the pool. The initial swimming evaluation forms just such an effective test. Alternatively the member could be referred to his or her GP for a fitness test.

Further Training

Q. How much does additional training cost once I've completed my basic training?

A. We do not charge for subsequent training to Sports Diver and beyond, other than for training materials (approx £25/grade), any room hire charges and diving costs, provided you are a full diving member of both the Branch and BSAC. However, you will be expected to have your own equipment by this stage. BSAC also offer lots of skill development courses (SDCs) on topics such as Boat Handling; Navigation and Chartwork; Dive Planning and Marshalling; First Aid for Divers; Practical Rescue Management; and many more, and again these are generally charged at cost. This is where the branch system really comes into its own as a commercial enterprise would typically charge £250-350 for each additional diver grade and £100-250 for SDCs.

Q. What are skill development courses?

A. BSAC provides a wide range of SDCs for divers at varying levels of proficiency. These courses aim to expand the range of activities open to divers, to introduce them to new subjects and to guide them to higher levels of competence in specialist areas. SDCs are a self contained short courses, usually of 1 or 2 days duration. The skills taught are complimentary to existing diver training and aim to enhance the overall safety of diving, develop diving and related skills and to enhance the diving experience. Current SDCs include the following and, whilst we cannot necessarily offer all of these within the branch, the regional coaching scheme gives you access to courses we cannot provide:

- **Rescue** - life saving, first aid, oxygen administration
- **Technical Diving** - use of mixed gases and rebreathers, nitrox, extended range diving
- **Seamanship** - boat handling, chartwork, navigation, outboard maintenance
- **Scientific** - marine life appreciation, underwater photography
- **Diving** - dive planning, ice diving, searches, wreck appreciation

Q. Why would you want to do a skill development course?

A. Because each SDC is self contained then it will provide a complete package of new skills for anyone who undertakes the training. Some courses are complimentary to the Diver Training Programme (DTP) and give credit for specific and sometimes large groups of lessons for the DTP (e.g. Oxygen Administration counts for lessons DT2 - DT7 of Dive Leader but can be taken by Ocean Divers). Other Course (especially Seamanship) require no diving skills whatever and so can be attended by any member.

Q. I'm already an instructor with another agency. Can I teach on BSAC courses?

A. Yes, BSAC recognise instructors qualified with most agencies. However, you need to attend an Instructor Foundation Course and apply to BSAC HQ with payment for the Induction Pack and OWI card (currently £40) and then you will be awarded BSAC's Open Water Instructor qualification. This is to ensure that you understand the BSAC syllabus and methods of teaching, as all agencies have variations in their training, even though the basic skills are similar.

Q. How do I become a BSAC Instructor?

A. The first step in qualifying as a BSAC Diving Instructor is to attend the two-day Instructor Foundation Course (IFC), where the essential elements of instruction are taught. Members who have attained Dive Leader grade can complete the Theory

Instructor Exam (TIE) at any stage after attendance on the IFC. On completion of the IFC members who are Dive Leaders can further build their teaching experience by attendance at an Open Water Instructor Course (OWIC). Following OWIC attendance and after further practice and experience at Branch level those who have gained Dive Leader status can apply for the Practical Instructor Exam (PIE). On completion of both TIE and PIE you will be awarded BSAC's Open Water Instructor qualification.

Learning to Dive

Q. How long does it take to learn to dive?

A. Ocean Diver training generally takes 4-5 months to complete, weather permitting. You must be prepared to commit a fair amount of your free time to training during your course.

Q. What does the training consist of?

A. Ocean Diver training involves some 8 hours of theory instruction and 8 hours of practical lessons. This is followed by 7 dives in the sea to complete your qualification. The aim of this training is to teach you to be competent in the safe and correct use of all appropriate open water scuba diving equipment in a sheltered water training area and then to introduce you to open water diving under the supervision of a BSAC Nationally Qualified Instructor.

Q. Where do I learn?

A. Training takes place on Wednesday evenings at either Totnes Pool at 7.30 p.m. (wet sessions) or at Meadowbrook Community Centre in Dartington at 8.00 p.m. (theory lessons). Open water training takes place on Saturdays and some weekday evenings.

Q. How old do I have to be (or am I too old)?

A. The minimum age we will accept someone for training or diving is 14. However, for 14-17 year olds we do require that a parent or guardian is also a diver and is present during all training and diving. However, this doesn't mean that you cannot learn to dive if they aren't a diver, just get them to come along and train too! At the other end of the scale, one is rarely too old to start scuba diving there are many active divers in their 70s in the UK.

Q. How much does it cost to learn to dive?

A. Pool work, course materials ("The Diving Manual", Student Notes and Qualification Book), air, use of equipment and lectures cost £250, but this payment can be spread over 3 months. You must also complete the 7 open water dives, which you pay for as you go (the current charges are: shore dives - free; boat dives - £10.00; air fills £2.25) and you will need to join the Branch (£9.00 per month) and BSAC (annual membership, including insurance, is currently £50.00 or £25.00 for students). As Meadowbrook Community Centre is a private members club you will also need to become a member to use the facilities. However, this only costs £13.50 a year (£7.00 for senior citizens and juniors), plus an initial joining fee of £5.00, and the drinks are cheap! Membership of the Branch and BSAC gives you access to the club equipment; cheap diving; free use of the pool during our Wednesday evening "wet" session; discounts at some of the local dive shops; 12 monthly copies of BSAC Dive magazine; and Public Liability Insurance cover up to £10 million.

Q. Do I need a medical?

A. You must complete a Medical Self-Declaration before commencing pool training. In particular circumstances we may require you to consult a medical referee to confirm your fitness to dive.

Q. What equipment do I need?

A. Initially all you need is your own mask, snorkel and fins as we can supply the other training equipment (however, we do require you to leave a cheque deposit of £250 against the loan equipment, but this will not be cashed unless the equipment is lost or damaged). Once you have completed Ocean Diver training you will need to buy your own kit and you will be told all about this during your training.

Q. How much does diving equipment cost?

A. As with most things you can spend as much or as little as you like on kit but you should be able to get a reasonably good quality mask for £25-35 whilst a set of fins will set you back anything between £30-80. You shouldn't spend more than £10 on a snorkel. We will be giving you advice on what to buy when you start the course so you don't need to worry about it too much at the moment. However, before you go in the sea you will need to have a good wetsuit, ideally 7-8mm thick and, once you have completed your Ocean Diver training, you will hopefully want to get your own gear and continue diving with us. If you buy new some guide prices for the essentials are: semi-dry wetsuit ~£175 (or drysuit ~£250-£500), boots ~£25, stab jacket ~£250, regulator & gauges ~£250, air cylinder ~£150, knife ~£25, weight belt ~£40, watch ~£30 and torch ~£15-150(!). However, there tends to be a healthy supply of good safe second hand equipment available. Even hardly used equipment is often half the price of the new item. With a little luck and patience you may be able to buy most of what you need for £600 or so.

Q. Do I have to be an expert swimmer?

A. Not at all. A good basic level of swimming ability is all that is required.

Q. Do I have to be super-fit?

A. No. A reasonable level of fitness is enough.

Q. Is there anything that might preclude me from diving?

A. There are very few cases where someone is unable to dive. Conditions like severe asthma or ear problems, lung or heart disease, epilepsy and diabetes could possibly prohibit you entering dive training. All prospective divers are required to complete a medical self-declaration form, prior to commencing training.

Q. Is it dangerous?

A. It can be, but that's why you need proper training. To put things into perspective, although there have been several deaths each year, given that there are many tens of thousands of active divers in the UK, making hundreds of thousands of dives each year, the headlines in the papers can be mis-leading. Like any adventure sport diving is as dangerous as you personally want to make it, you are probably at more risk driving to the dive site than actually diving.

Q. Can I dive abroad with my BSAC qualification?

A. Yes. The qualification is recognised world-wide.

Q. Would it be quicker to learn to dive elsewhere?

A. There are organisations which do offer diving courses over the course of a single week or a few weekends. Such courses are generally available through Dive Shops or Centres.

Q. I need vision correction. Is that a problem?

A. Not at all. Many divers wear contact lenses and prescription masks are also available.

Q. How can I be sure of being properly trained?

A. Scuba diving is a potentially dangerous sport and therefore high quality training is our club's top priority. All our instructors have themselves undergone vigorous

training by BSAC and have passed theoretical and practical exams. They all have internationally recognised qualifications.

Q. What if I have an accident or am injured in some way while diving?

A. Safety is of paramount importance in TSAC. All trainees are taught to dive defensively and within safe limits. Accidents do occasionally happen, as with any sport, and it is advisable to take out insurance cover for personal loss or injury through your own insurers.

Q. How soon can I get started?

A. We usually run an Ocean Diver course once a year, starting in January.

Q. What does it mean to be certified?

A. It means that you've learned basic scuba diving skills from a nationally qualified instructor, and are qualified to dive in open water with a buddy. Dive operators will require your certification card and your diving log book before they take you for a dive.

Q. After I finish my Ocean Diver certification, what can I do?

A. The best thing you can do is to go diving and build-up some experience, and then think about doing your Sports Diver certification.

Q. For how long will I be certified?

A. Your certification does not expire, but if you don't dive regularly your skills can become "rusty" and it is highly recommended that you keep in practice.

Q. How deep can I go?

A. The maximum depth for a BSAC Ocean Diver is 20 metres.

Q. If I only want to dive on holiday in warm water is training with a UK Club for me?

A. Possibly not. The conditions are very different in the UK from most holiday destinations and the training has an emphasis on the skills you need for this. However, that said, if you can dive in the UK you can probably dive in most places. The training is also geared around integrating you into the dive club and takes place over a period of 3-4 months. It might be better to go you a local dive school where you can learn in only 1-2 weeks. You can always come back and dive with us once you've learnt if you get the diving "bug".

Q. Whilst I'm to learning to dive, is there anything my children can participate in?

A. Yes, they can learn to snorkel in the pool.

Already a Diver

Q. I learnt to dive with another organisation. Will you accept my qualification?

A. Yes, we welcome previous diver training by recognised organisations, whether recreational, commercial or military. Divers can join us and enjoy diving within the recommendations of their existing qualification and BSAC Safe Diving Practices (whichever is the more conservative).

Q. So I can just join Totnes and go diving?

A. Yes, but the method depends on whether you wish to continue your training or not. There are three options open to you, as set-out below:

OPTION 1

Qualified divers wishing to join TSAC but NOT CONTINUE their training with the BSAC:

- The diver joins TSAC and BSAC/SAA.
- The diver presents evidence of their alternative diving qualification.
- TSAC consults the 'similarity table' and identifies the alternative diver qualification with the appropriate BSAC diver grade.
- The diver is then integrated into the Branch and treated as a diver of that similar grade.
- There is no documentation to be issued, i.e., Qualification Record Book, training material etc. to the new member. Divers will be expected to attend a brief 'Induction to the BSAC' lesson based on parts of BSAC Ocean Diver training programme – OT1 and OT4, which will describe how the Branch structure works, outline the aims, beliefs and function of BSAC as the national governing body, what BSAC membership offers and provide an overview of the BSAC '88 Decompression Tables. The Branch Diving Officer, or Training Officer, may also encourage further theory study and skills practice to 'close any gaps' which might become apparent on review of qualifications and practical experience, such as a controlled buoyant lift.

OPTION 2

Qualified divers wishing to join TSAC and FURTHERING their training with the BSAC.

Should a diver, qualified by another diver training organisation, wish to further their diver training with the BSAC, the qualifications they already hold are recognised as a starting point for further training by the issue of a Statement of Alternative Training (SALT) page, issued as part of the training pack they purchase.

To obtain furthering diver training with the BSAC:

- Join TSAC and BSAC.
- On request, TSAC will order a 'Crossover Training Pack' for the next BSAC diver grade. The 'Crossover Training Pack' will include the Student Notes and a BSAC Qualification Record Book - with an extra SALT page to record the previous training.
- On completion of the course, the diver will be a BSAC qualified diver at that new grade.

With this process, the NEW member may train for the next higher BSAC qualification. The process has to assume that the person has only just obtained the certificate they hold. It cannot offer any credit for variables such as additional diving experience gained since the qualification was achieved, or training undertaken on incomplete courses. This process applies only to diving qualifications and not to diving instructor qualifications.

OPTION 3

Qualified BSAC divers undertaking FURTHER TRAINING with other organisations:

If a diver, having crossed over to the BSAC via a previous SALT, wishes to continue their training with other organisations, this is acceptable. Should their training advance their skill level, they may reintegrate back into BSAC training via a further SALT. Once again, they may require additional training and a "crossover" training pack needs to be obtained. Again the Branch Diving Officer will only award similarity to the higher BSAC grade when all required additional training is completed.

Nothing in this process removes or alters the Branch Diving Officer's responsibility for the safety and well-being of Branch members. If the Diving Officer feels that the skills of a new member, originally trained by another organisation, are lacking, the DO is at liberty to require the member to undertake appropriate refresher training and/or limit their open water diving activities until a satisfactory level of skills performance

Q. I trained on holiday; will you take me diving?

A. It depends, the answer is probably 'yes -but...'. Due to the differences in UK conditions when compared to holiday destinations you are probably not prepared for what you will encounter. We would suggest that you come along to the club to discuss the sort of diving you have done and how we operate and then take it from there. However, we do not hire equipment so you will need your own dive kit to be able to dive with us.

Q. I'm a PADI Open Water/Advanced Open Water Diver. How deep can I dive?

A. Under BSAC rules a PADI Advanced Open Water diver can dive to 30m if they are paired with a BSAC Dive Leader or equivalent. If they are buddied with a Sports Diver, Ocean Diver or another PADI AOW the maximum depth they can go to is 20 m. The PADI 'Deep Diving' qualification is not recognised by BSAC.

PADI Open Water divers are limited to 20m.

Q. I'm a PADI Open Water/Advanced Open Water Diver. Will you accept these qualifications?

A. PADI OWs and AOWs do not have to crossover to BSAC if they simply want to dive to their existing qualification and do not want to continue their training with BSAC. However, we do require that they attend a couple of orientation lectures and undertake some basic rescue training, as set-out below:

1. A brief 'Introduction to BSAC' lesson based on OT1 which describes the branch structure and how BSAC functions as a governing body
2. OT4, which covers BSAC tables and using Nitrox.
3. Controlled buoyant lift and alternative source ascents in the pool and sea from 6 m. (Basic Life Support is taught during the next qualification level, which is Sports Diver).

If divers wish to progress their training with BSAC, then they will need to "crossover" to BSAC, which, in addition to the orientation and rescue sessions described above, will then enable them to progress to Sports Diver level when the branch next runs this course (we usually run it once a year). In order to commence the crossover process, they will need a crossover pack, which the branch can order from BSAC. The cost of the crossover pack is £42 including postage. This contains 'The Diving Manual', qualification filofax, Sports Diver Student notes with A5 ring binder. The branch provides pool sessions and lectures for Sports Diver training free of charge to members, but trainees will need to pay for any boat dives involved.

Q. I'm just visiting the area – can I come diving with you?

A. Visiting members of the BSAC or other recognized organizations are welcome to dive with the branch if it is possible under the prevailing circumstances. However, you will need your logbook and qualification book/card so that we can be satisfied about your status and experience.