

University of London Sub-Aqua Club BSAC 0069

University of London Sub-Aqua Club

Issue 5 - 30th October 2004



Summer Expedition: The South of France

The Challenge: Aims and Planning...

The ULSAC Summer Expedition is an integral part of the years diving calendar. This year we wanted to go to an area new to the club, which was unique, interesting and historic. We decided to take the club back to the roots of modern day underwater exploration: Marseille and the Bay of Hyères in the South of France. Marseille is after all where Cousteau tested his first aqualung! We had been inspired by a special showing of 'The Silent World' movie organised as a social for the club, at the British Film Institute. On that cold January evening we got chatting in the pub afterwards about the original book, and our research into this jewel of the Med began.

Purchasing a paper copy of the Cousteau classic and scouring the internet for information and advice it became clear to us that the area was largely forgotten and uncharted territory by the British

We were pleasantly surprised when we arrived in Marseille in the first week, by how lovely the city itself actually was. The help and support we received from the locals was

phenomenal, and they seemed impressed that we had researched the area thoroughly already. We arrived enthusing about diving the infamous Dalton and the local divers were keen to share GPS coordinates of wrecks that we had read about. We were soon fondly referred to as 'the English Divers' by the locals at the Port Pointe Rouge – finding our smoothly run outfit a source of much interest and fascination. The French divers said that it had been a long time since divers of other nationalities had visited the area, with them usually succumbing to the lure of the Côte d'Azur.

Moving along the coast in the second week to the Bay of Hyères we continued on our voyage of underwater discovery. Staying on Le Presqu'île de Giens we continued our exploration of wrecks dived by Cousteau: the Donator, Michel C and Ferrando (which has become legal to dive again this year) and also nature reserves in the surrounding area. The locals were more used to international divers, as we were entering Côte d'Azur territory, but still proved to be helpful, if not slightly in awe of the 20 or so British divers that had invaded!

Dive Inside This Issue:-

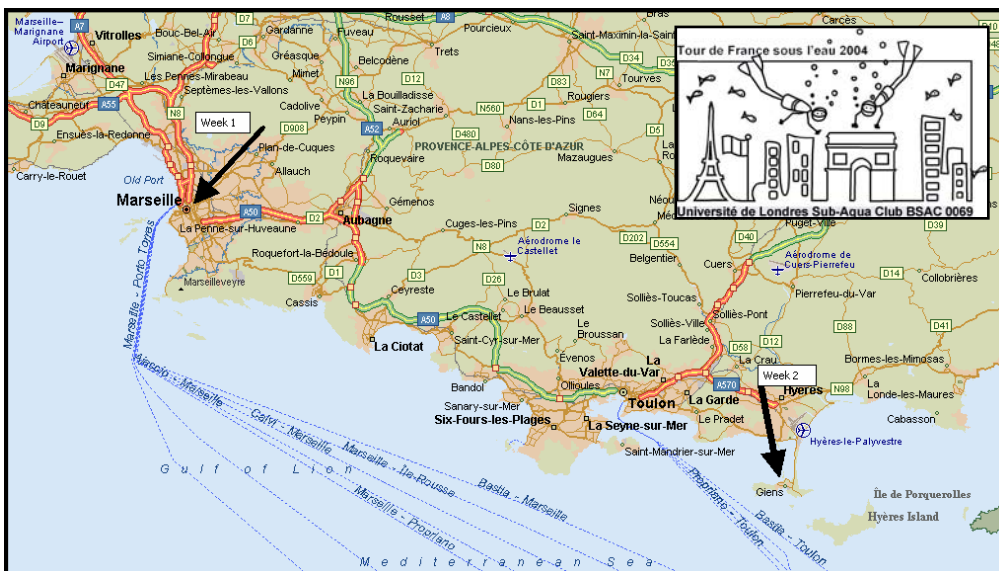
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Editors Note:

Most of the Summer Expedition reports I have taken as excerpts from the main Trip report to be published in due course, so this is just a little taster, keep your eyes peeled for the full report.

Member Updates:-

Congratulations to Jon and Rachael on the birth of baby Oliver





Travel...

Travel was a big issue, with special licences being required to drive vehicles carrying 7 or more people in France, and so use of budget airline and public transport was a suitable alternative. This itself produced a number of other logistical issues however, such as planning of internal travel arrangements and also finding accommodation within walking distance of launch sites. Use of budget airlines also allowed student members of the club to come for a shorter part of the expedition and keep within their financial constraints.

Weather...

Diving in the South of France is often difficult late in the summer due to the 'Mistral'. This is a Northerly wind caused by warm air coming off the mainland. In the afternoon the wind also generally increases, we decided to go in the second week of September and we were very lucky with the weather - the previous two weeks encountering very strong winds that would have prohibited much diving.

Launching and Accommodation...

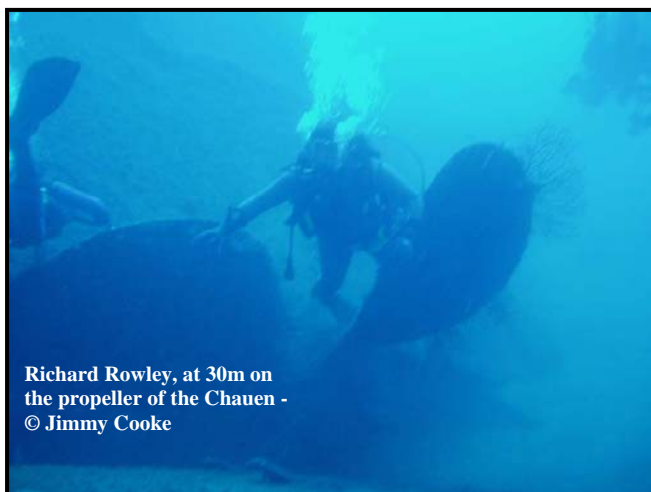
Finding launch sites proved interesting, local dive shops in Marseille were very helpful and let us know which slipways we could use.

Our original plan was to camp in order to save costs, but we were unable to find a campsite in Marseille. However the youth hostel charged a very reasonable rate, provided three course meals and was within a 15 minute walk of one of the available launch sites. We ended up launching daily from the Port Point Rouge

(43°14.567 N, 05°21.912 E).

We also discovered that rates for mobile homes worked out only £5 per week more expensive per head in the second week than camping... which was probably more than redeemed in reduced food costs as people could more easily self cater.

By Jimmy Cooke and Catherine Stanley
Expedition Organisers



Richard Rowley, at 30m on the propeller of the Chauen - © Jimmy Cooke

Diving in Marseille (Week 1)...

Though windy on the surface, the conditions were very calm once underwater, and the visibility was extremely good, allowing the divers to admire the wreck from bow to stern from reasonably far away. Having only dived in UK waters previously with 5ish meters visibility on a good day, it was a rather eye-opening experience for me!

The Chauen, which had only sunk 30 years ago further out of Marseille bay was also on the agenda. Until recently, the bow section had been above water, but over time she had gradually slipped down underwater, and now lies 2 meters underwater at bow, and at 36 meters at stern. This was an extremely well preserved wreck lying on her starboard side. Almost all of the features were still intact, and the sheer size of the hull and the bridge were particularly impressive. The more experienced divers also had the opportunity to have a good look at the propellers and the engine room.

We also did scenic dives, one of which was a dive through a tunnel, some 15 meters underwater, and about 30-40 meters long. Diving through a pitch black tunnel with only torchlight was very exciting, and proved to be one of the highlights of the trip.

We also dived the remains of a yacht the San Dominico, which had been recommended by one of the local divers. She had sunk just north of the old harbour in Marseille, and lay at around 27-35 meters. Although the wood had rotten away, the metal frame was still intact, and gave the whole wreck a 'hollow' feeling, as you could see through the whole structure. The wreck, as with the Liban and the Chauen, provided shelter for numerous fish and other marine life.

With excellent weather and diving conditions the week in Marseille was one of the most enjoyable of the summer, and also a great start for the expedition.

By Yo Nishihara

The Chauen (43°11.921 N, 05°13.735 E).

My Experience of the ULSAC Summer Expedition

Diving in the Mediterranean is very different to diving in British waters. Apart from being noticeably warmer the real difference is in terms of visibility.

Socially we had a grand time; especially in the second week where we self catered in chalets.

No arguments, no fall outs just lots of quality laughter and good times. Despite the snoring controversies

The expedition made a brilliant end to my first season as a diver. It was a good opportunity to consolidate what I learned and really start to relax and love diving.. . In the water my buoyancy skills and use of kit have really improved.

So to conclude, the trip was a fantastic opportunity - which I'm sure we all enjoyed. We all did lots of great diving and made new friends in the club and deepened our existing friendships. I'm just looking forward to next season, and next year's expedition; after all I'm not scared of flying any more!

By Richard Rowley



A Day Dive Marshalling...

La Grotte Mystérieuse:

(43°11.738 N 005°21.934 E)

Our goal involved not having to run through the local town centre in our wet suits to reach the youth hostel on time for dinner. For this we had a plan A, B, C and ½D. The plan had to accommodate wind coming from the East, the North and anything between. (Plan D in French stands for se Débrouiller which means as much as whatever works).

Plan A was diving the 'Perez cave', which had been studied for years by a French professor called Perez of the Institute for Maritime Research

The eastern wind we expected the next morning was nowhere to be found and it was clear that plan B was required. This involved diving the Chaouen in two waves with the RIBs, ULSACs Rascal and the Oxford Hooker. Initially the idea was to then dive the wreck of the Liban once more in the afternoon, however with the favourable sea state we turned to plan ½C which was 'la Grotte Mystérieuse'. A bit further away than the Liban 'la Grotte Mystérieuse' goes through 'l'île Jarre'. Local divers confirmed that this was an easy dive of 15 to 25 meters deep possible with the given weather. The cave was estimated to be a 100 meters long swim through in a 90° angle. The sea was calm and we reached the location with a nice view on the islands rocky outcrops. The dive plan was simple have fun get down, get

in, get out and release DSMB (referred to as parachute in French) while swimming around an area that proved to be a nice scenic location

It was noticed by James who was supervising me that I was rather relieved to see all these flashy red SMBs coming up at the other side of the rocky outcrop of the island. While there was no real risk of our divers getting lost in this cave, I nevertheless felt very responsible

By Kristof Bostoan



The light at the end of the tunnel! © Will Robards

Le Dalton...

(43°11.993 N 005°13.843 E)

On a sunny Thursday morning, 9th September, we set off to dive 'Le Dalton' already dived by Cousteau and Dumas. This English cargo ship which was carrying 1500 tonnes of lead sank in February 1928 just off L'île de Planier to where we headed in our boats from Marseille port. Interestingly enough Le Dalton crashed into the island during seasonal celebrations, and Cousteau reported finding several empty bottles of spirits near the helm!

Shortly after the shot was put in place we kitted up on the boats and rolled backwards into the sea. As we descended the shot line, my buddy Sarah and I noticed quite a strong current. We had to fin fairly hard for quite a while to get to the wreck because the shot wasn't directly on it.

One of the best moments on a dive (especially when the visibility is as good as here in France) is often when you first spot the wreck on your way down and slowly sink onto it. Same this time when we arrived right in the middle of this 70 meter long ship where it was broken in two. It looked surprisingly like the picture in the book someone showed me the day before. We decided to swim straight down to the stern which we knew was still quite intact.

After we had a good look at the stern, we made our way to the bow. Swimming over the broken bits of metal, we noticed fishing net caught on the wreck with some dead fish inside- not such a nice image, although Laura managed to free several fish that would otherwise have died. Much prettier was all that red branching coral we discovered towards the bow. This bit of the wreck, now at 12 meters, was very broken up and spread out over the rocks. . Another very pleasant dive!

By Petz Scholtus



Stern section of the Dalton © Will Robards

San Domenico...

(43°18.612 N 05°20.793 E)

Christof, a friendly local rescue diver, had offered to take us to "The San Domenico", his favourite dive site around Marseille.

Having negotiated the America's Cup competitors and a minor run in with the Coastguard escorts, we were on our way to the dive site.

ULSAC divers inside the San Domenico © Anthony Chaddock



The dive itself was great, my buddy Jimmy had learnt to dive with me over four years ago and the last time we dived together in France we had a fantastic dive, so we were both looking forward to getting into the water. I really wanted Jimmy to have a good dive as he and Catherine were working so hard on the surface as trip organisers that his real holiday was only when he was underwater.

We swam off to the stern along the port side Jimmy snapping away with his camera, it really was a very cool dive. We then ascended up the starboard side and into the wreck in between some beams that ran all along her. Swimming above the murk passed what to me at least looked like a giant oak trunk that was actually some netting hanging down inside the wreck on the starboard side. Until we got to the bow where there was netting everywhere covered in life but we were both very careful not to spoil our dive by getting entangled. Then it was time to ascend, so we swam up and towards the shot watching all the divers descend past us and work their way around the wreck as we waited on the shot line soaking it all up.

That is the main thing I like about diving in the Med, the way you can see everything going on 20 or 30 metres below.

It was one of the best dives I did on the trip and I hope Jimmy felt the same

By Nathan Long

Diving from the Presqu'île de Giens...

As I was unable to come for the first week of the Summer Trip, I made my own way to Giens on Sunday 12th September – I flew into Marseilles, and then took the train down to Hyeres.

The campsite was very nice – well kept, and our cottages all had tables out on the veranda, meaning much al fresco dining for everybody! The campsite was a 20 - 30 minute walk (depending on whether wearing trainers or flipflops!) from the dive site, which offered a tantalising first glimpse of the sea from behind the fig trees lining the road. The dive site was at La Tour Fondue, a fort which is now sadly empty and locked up. The ferry to the islands off the peninsular and the handful of cafes and stalls meant it was a pleasant place to mill about at lunchtimes and the view looking out to sea was really lovely.

My first day of diving dawned bright and blue – perfect. The Dive Leaders - including brand new Catherine and Sarah :o) - in the group were diving the 50m Donator in the morning (42°59.594 N 06°16.464 E) which I hear was pretty amazing!), so the rest of us were dispatched first to a great scenic wall dive off the island of Porquerolles – it was so lovely and warm, and I was really pleasantly surprised by the amount of colour and diversity amongst the fish and corals, as I had wrongly assumed France would be closer to Britain than the Red Sea in terms of its aquatic life.

The seven of us then spent a couple of hours on Porquerolles, lunching, shopping, swimming and skimming stones, followed by a dive on a little wreck, which James was able to find without the chart, impressively.

Thursday was shore diving only, it scored highly for me, as I got my Sports Diver qualification, so thanks lots to Michelle for coming out with me on a day when most people were chilling out on the beach. As a final farewell to diving in the South of France, the gods smiled upon us for a lovely last day, all sun and laughter.

By Rosy Hosking



Soft coral – careful ULSAC diver
© Will Robards

Return to the Rubis...

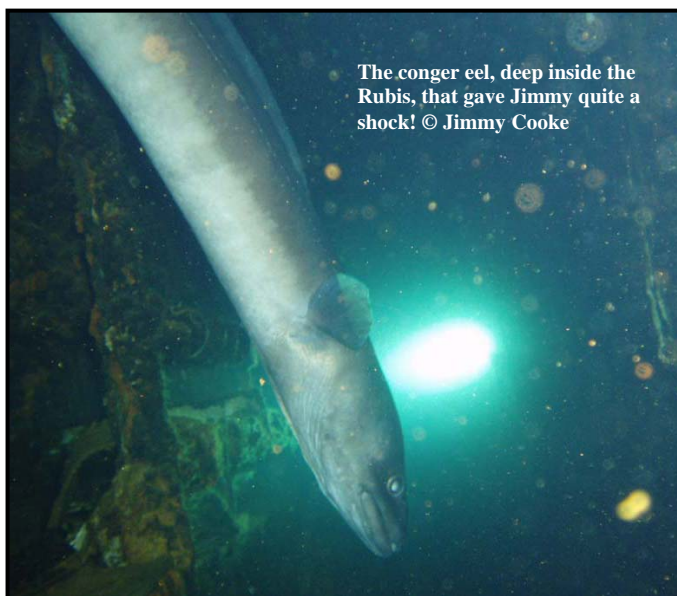
(43°11.287 N 06°42.032 E)

It was the end of two weeks of fantastic diving in the South of France, and for those of us driving the vans back, this was an opportunity to conclude the expedition in style. We would have to make an early start if we were going to dive the Rubis and still arrive in good time for our ferry crossing from Calais.

Jimmy and I started our tour at the stern, moving forward from the rudder, over the now exposed mine bays. We continued past the corroded conning tower and gun platform, over the deck which has rotted away to reveal some of the inner workings of the submarine, and on towards the bow. Only the regular flashes of Jimmy's camera punctuated our overview of the Rubis as each of its interesting features came into view.

Every hatch seemed to have at least one diver in residence, and a ring of other curious divers peering in, like some sort of strange neoprene rosette.

There was a short narrow vertical section to negotiate before gaining access to the interior, which after a quick inspection for obstructions, other divers, and stirred up silt, I



The conger eel, deep inside the Rubis, that gave Jimmy quite a shock! © Jimmy Cooke

deemed safe for entry.

Once he was in I lead him down the narrow walkway towards the light, which was indeed from another hatch large enough to accommodate a diver with a twin-set. Turning to await Jimmy's arrival, I saw that he was making some unusual thrusting motions with his (my) torch. I was just starting to

get concerned when he stopped to take some photos, he wouldn't do that if there were a problem, he must be fine I thought.

It was only during our deco stop that I saw the photos, and later chatting on the boat, that I discovered the true drama of Jimmy's experience in the engine room. My passage through the engine room must have stirred one of the many congers that inhabit the Rubis, whose subsequent behaviour produced a rather shaken Jimmy.

The Congar proceeded to coil itself round his legs and some of his more delicate regions. Luckily he managed to extricate himself from the conger's clutches without angering it too much, and lived to dive another day.

By Richard Myatt

Two vans, two boats, six d(r)ivers and some tyres!

Assuming the worst, I loaded the van with all necessities for the journey: sweets, chocolate, crisps, apples (had to be a little bit healthy), wet wipes, pillow, sleeping bag, tent (you never know)

So, steering wheel grasped firmly in puny arms and with best white van lady expression on face, I took to the road. And found it surprisingly easy. Apart from missing the junction to the M25 because I was concentrating too hard on going in a straight line and hadn't thought about *turning*. But we were soon wending our merry way along the Kent highways to Dover, trying desperately to reach 60mph up hills and just scraping it onto the 7pm ferry to Calais.

Tip for future drivers: I Custom officials seem a little disarmed at a girl driving a van/towing a boat and don't ask you what's in the back, always useful when you're about to miss a ferry.

Unfortunately the other van and boat hadn't managed to make the ferry: due to a quirk of the M25/M26 junction, they had found themselves heading for Heathrow and needing to turn around in rush hour traffic, giving us a 3 hour head-start. And so we hit France and the other-side-of-the-road with stomachs full of acidic cappuccinos and a van that occasionally hit 110 km/h, but only downhill and only when it felt like it.

A jolting and rocking whilst Will was driving woke Rich and I up

to the fact we had a burst tyre. On an unlit hard shoulder somewhere north of Lyon, Will and Rich struggled with a jack and a new tyre by the light of a dive torch, while I looked fetching in the required high-visibility fluorescent yellow jacket making sure that on-coming vehicles noticed our warning triangle. After much effort and covered in oil, the boys replaced the shredded bit of a rubber we once called a tyre and we continued, finally hitting Lyon as the sun came up.

After stopping off to buy a new spare tyre, the rest of the journey went without a hitch, until a few miles outside of Marseille when our suspiciously flat-looking trailer tyre (we had been pumping it up, but to no avail) gave up the ghost and burst, once again landing us in the hard shoulder. Once more, we took up our roles: Rich and Will getting dirty and me donning the fluorescent jacket. Only this time it was 30°C and I was beginning to feel like a boil-in-the-bag dinner.

We finally made it to the youth hostel. It had only taken us 26 hours and we were only 3 hours behind the other van. Luckily, the rest of the group (who had flown over the evening before and had spent the day relaxing in Marseille) were on hand to lead us to the showers, shovel some food down our throats, put a beer in our hand and then send us to bed. I have never slept so well!

By Sarah Cant



Dates for Your Diary

November 2004						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

December 2004						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

January 2005						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Social Events for Your Calendar

- 4th Dec Diving Officers Conference
- 13th Dec Dive Planning and Marshalling Meeting
- 16th Dec Christmas Party TBC
- 25th, 27th and 28th Dec 2004 Bank Holidays
- 1st and 3rd Jan 2005 Bank Holidays

Key	
	Special events
	Fundraising Events
	Dive Trips
	Bank Holidays

Upcoming Diving Trips for Your Calendar

- 20-21st Nov Boat Handling Course
- 28th Nov NDC Training Day
- 5th Dec Oxygen Administration Course
- 22nd Jan Training Day Wraysbury

ULSAC Christmas Calendar 2005

Available soon from Catherine only £6 each

Training

Freshers Fair 2004 ULU

Organiser: Mr Mark Bell (Training Officer)

The lifeblood of a student club like ULSAC is its ability to attract new members. There was a time when the chance to have a go at SCUBA diving was enough to attract huge numbers of students to our sport, but with mass participation in adventure sports and holidays, we have to fight much harder to attract students who have often already dived in tropical waters, to try the delights of the North Sea and English Channel.

Knowing our market, we attacked the harsh realities of the Freshers' fayre with our usual zeal and battled against being stuck in a darkened corner of room 101 surrounded by semi-naked water polo players and muscle bound rowers. Thanks to a combination of an audio-visual presentation projected on to a nearby wall, traditional pictures and posters behind our stall, leaflets, a host of kit to play with and the not too subtle tactic of parking a boat outside the building, we were able to make an assault on three

of the five senses of our student audience.

So having stimulated over 300 people into pledging their interest in ULSAC on paper, we had achieved our first target for the year and were expecting a big turn out for the introductory talk that launches our training year. Recognising the hard work and dedication of our band of merry volunteers, our stall shared first prize, awarded by ULU, for the best stand at the fayre and pocketed a £50 prize for the club.

Much as we all loved talking about diving to hundreds of potential new members for two days solid, it did send me quite hoarse- and it was touch and go whether I would be able to give the introductory talk. From our 300 potentials, 131 attended the intro talk and audiovisual presentation, and around 100 the next two lectures making all our hard work worthwhile. Now comes the real task of training them all!



U.L.S.A.C.

Any Contributions or Comments please send to

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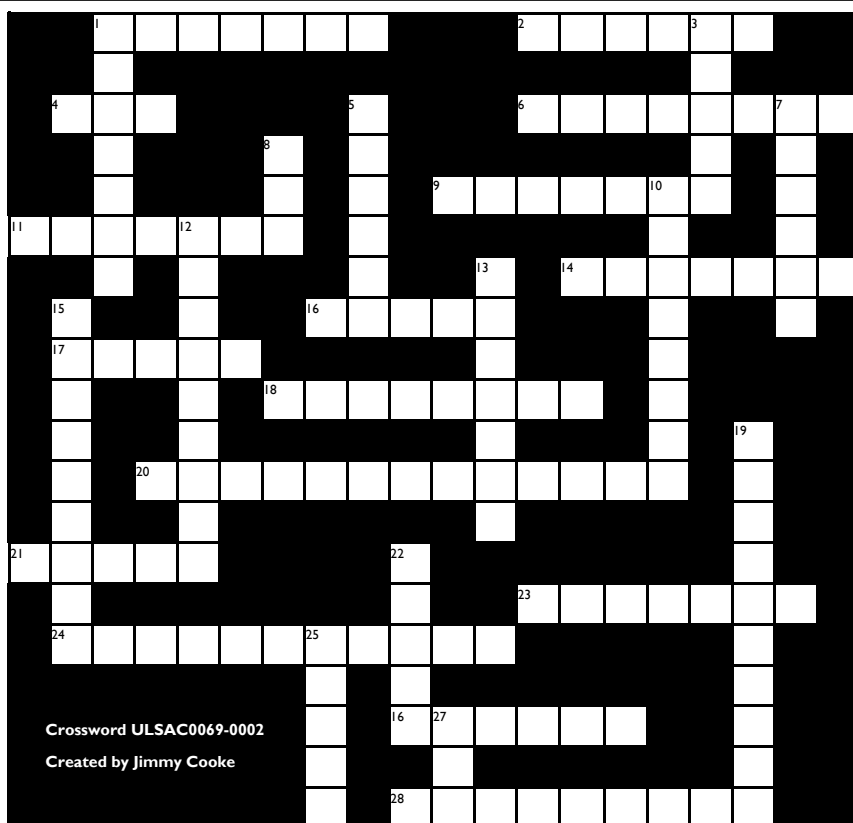
Phone: 07860 935925
Email: boatie@btinternet.com

Congratulations to Former Diving Officer James Withers who was the only entry with all answers correct. James has won himself a BUDDY Mug.

Answers on last months crossword are available at www.ULSAC.net

The prize for this Months Competition is.....

A Summer Expedition T-Shirt



Crossword ULSAC0069-0002
Created by Jimmy Cooke

Crossword Competition No. 2

All answers to Me (at the address above) by the 28th February 2005, make sure you've filled in the tie break at the bottom of the page, just in case we have two correct entries.

ACROSS

1. Still largely intact, she sank in 1970 approaching Marsaille causing an orange shortage (7)
2. Fins (Fr) (6)
4. Yes (Fr) (3)
6. Six thousand tonne spanish cargo ship, sounds a bit like an ABBA song, Cousteau only found it to dive once... (8)
9. Smile for a french photo! (Fr) (7)
11. Flag (Fr) (7)
14. Greek Steamer torpedoed off Porquerolles island in 1944 (7)
16. Thank you (Fr) (5)
17. Built in Glasgow in 1882, she sank off the Maire island after a collision (5)
18. Bread stick (Fr) (8)
20. Not just ordinary fish soup (13)
21. Frederic ****, chief diver on board Cousteau's ship (5)
23. Collective name for Porquerolles, Port-Cros and Le Levant (4,1'2)
24. Please (Fr) (2,4,5)
26. Mouth piece (Fr) (6)

DOWN

1. Knife (Fr) (7)
3. Wreck (Fr) (5)
5. Mask (Fr) (6)
7. Probably Cousteau's first wreck dive (6)
8. Water (Fr) (3)
10. Air Fill (Fr) (8)
12. Pace at which people kit up in the sunshine, and unusual food (Fr) (9)
13. Northerly french wind (7)
15. Divers (Fr) (9)
19. Type of sea fans (Fr) (10)
22. Beach (Fr) (5)
25. Lead (Fr) (5)
27. Sea (Fr) (3)

Tie Break ULSAC0069-0002 - I like Diving in the South of France because (12 words Max).....

.....