

Burghead Sub Aqua Club

Diving is always fun for this north east Scotland-based club, which combines a relaxed approach with a busy social calendar. Interview by **Kristina Pedder**

This traditional recreational diving club has varied local diving right on its doorstep, allowing even basic training to take place in the sea alongside day trips to the west coast of Scotland and expeditions to Scapa Flow, St Abbs, and as far south as the Farne Islands.

Members just enjoy diving and the social aspect that follows with a drink or two. There is a great entertainment team that organises gin nights, football hospitality days, curry nights and lots more social get-togethers.

Over the years the club has struggled with keeping numbers up or even getting people to come out and dive, but at present there is plenty of interest and plenty of training and diving going on.

When was the club formed?

On 22 July 1994, by a breakaway group from the Kinloss Military Club, to provide diving outside the military. Three of the founder members still belong to the club.

What sort of area of the country are you in?

Burghead is a small coastal village in Moray, north-east Scotland, where we do most of our diving. Our RIB is docked in Lossiemouth Harbour, eight miles further east.

Who are your members?

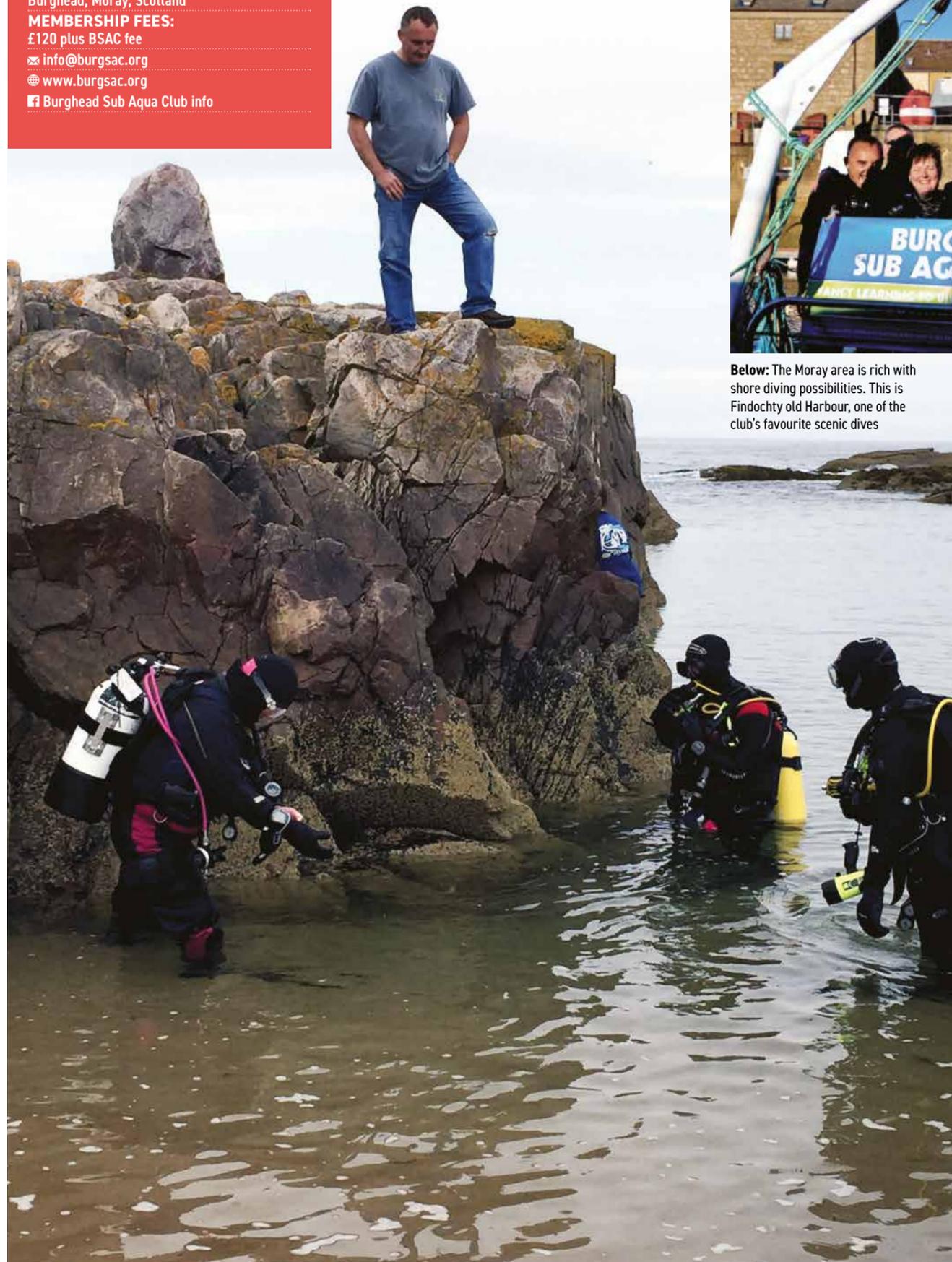
Our 43 members span a wide age range, from 25 to 70-plus. We all live within 30 miles of Burghead, in all directions. We have a few visiting members from other clubs who join us on expeditions to make up the numbers, as we can struggle. But membership is definitely growing: we have five trainees, nine Ocean Divers, 10 Sports Divers, 12 Dive Leaders and seven Advanced Divers. We gained six trainees in January 2019: two of the girls have passed their Ocean Diver already and are very keen to get out in the water at every chance.

Below: Ocean Diver pool training at Forres pool with Ken Scott



LOCATION:
Burghead, Moray, Scotland
MEMBERSHIP FEES:
£120 plus BSAC fee
✉ info@burgsac.org
🌐 www.burgsac.org
📌 Burghead Sub Aqua Club info

Right: Members meet in Lossiemouth harbour to mark their 25th anniversary prior to a dive on the Unity



Below: The Moray area is rich with shore diving possibilities. This is Findochty old Harbour, one of the club's favourite scenic dives

What resources does the club have?

The club doesn't have the financial resources for premises to store the RIB or compressors. We manage by having several compressors at various locations around Moray. We have our RIB moored in Lossiemouth Harbour during the dive season. We have various club-owned cylinders and drysuits for bringing on new trainees, plus oxygen kits and automated external defibrillators stored by our members.

Who is training at the club?

Twenty-three of our 43 members are in training. We have: five Sports Diver trainees; seven Dive Leader trainees, all of whom are close to completion; and two members are working towards Advanced Diver. The club has a positive, collaborative ethos and although we endeavour to train divers within each distinct level together, we remain flexible depending on individual ability and pace of development.

Where do you train?

We have access to two local swimming pools, Elgin and Forres, for early training, generally in early spring. We are lucky with where we live, as we can progress naturally to diving in the Moray Firth from a selection of shore and harbour sites and from our club RIB, as early summer approaches. Organised club expeditions also include training where appropriate.

Who delivers the training?

We have eight Open Water Instructors, two Assistant OWIs, five Assistant Diving Instructors and an Advanced Instructor. Where possible we deliver

Below: A nice calm summer day off of Ullapool slip. Alan and Iris Wright with Jacqui and Ross



Skill Development Courses in-house too: including Practical Rescue Management, Boat Handling, First Aid/Defibrillator training and Oxygen Administration. BSAC remains supportive and helpful as ever. While we appreciate the distances involved, more training events in Scotland would be welcome, whether it be via the Instructor Training Scheme or regional courses. It has helped that North Scotland Regional Coach Ken Scott lives within three miles of our club.

When do you dive?

Our club is a very active all year round, although mainly when our RIB is in the water between April and October. Then there is RIB or shore diving locally every week. Most of the club diving is open circuit and we have a healthy mix of wreckies, scenic lovers, photographers, nudi spotters, blennie lovers and the odd foodie. We have a crew of retirees in the club allowing a very active ‘Friday club’, otherwise we generally dive at weekends. This year two of our home grown members reached over 1,000 logged dives, a fair achievement for recreational diving.

Where do you dive?

We are very fortunate to have easy accessible reefs on our coastline, with a good smattering of wrecks in the Moray Firth in depths from 12m to 50m and more, including tanks, planes, fishing boats, submarines, yachts, and tankers. We are surrounded by some very large rivers, which can easily knock out the viz when on

spate, inevitably when the sea is calm. This combined with north and east winds can render our coastline undiveable.

But we are just two and half hours from the west coast sea lochs and head across there most months for some shore diving, allowing trainees some deep diving opportunities and some excellent winter diving, albeit very cold. There is a small hard-core of us who travel to the west coast for our last dive of the year, on 30 or 31 December. Conditions above water range from +12°C to minus 15°C, with water temps of 6°C to 2°C.

Does the club do any diving with a purpose?

For a team of three this year, the main purpose was training hard to complete the fundraising three-loch challenge set by Monty Halls and Andy Torbet. As part of the training they dived Coire An Lochan in Braeriach. This produced the best viz and the most atmospheric dive ever, according to Diving Officer Kenny Munro. On 28 June we set off in mist so thick we had to navigate the full hill walk by compass, he said, struggling to see more than 5m. Slipping into the cool 6°C water we were blessed with viz as far as you could see in vibrant blue water, making the seven-hour trek well worth it.

We have over the years, located, surveyed and identified a Wellington bomber of the Moray coast, counted salmon in rivers for the fishery boards and each year we provide diving and boat support for the local Burghhead boxing day charity harbour jump. We first put divers in to clear the bottom of obstructions; this

has brought up bikes, computers, fishing gear, and the usual harbour goodies. We then assist any jumpers overwhelmed by the cold, the height or the swim distance, finally sweeping the harbour of Christmas hats, fairy Alice bands and the like.

What is the club planning next?

We are saving for a new RIB. Ours has served us well but as it only takes four or five divers we could often do with more space. Every year we have a stall at the Marafun / Motorfun Rotary event. The money raised during the three-loch challenge was split between charities and our club. Last year we organised a race night and sold 200 tickets. This event raised several thousand pounds and we are already discussing how to do another event to bring in some more funds. We have applied for lottery funding for our RIB, although unsuccessfully so far.

Anything else you'd like to tell readers about?

Our club was 25 years old in 2019, with a good percentage of the founder members and first year of the club trainees still active. Many of our members are home grown, completing their training within the club and staying on. We feel this is down to our relaxed attitude to diving, combined with our very social calendar. Diving within our club has brought together dive buddies and lifelong friendships from within a very broad spectrum of personalities, that doesn't happen in normal life. For us diving is fun. ○