

SCOTTISH

# DIVER

May/June 2009  
£2.50



**Top Scottish Wall Dives**

**Scapa Made Easy**

**Ice Station Edinburgh**



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backward into the water and immersing the first stage before inhaling from the second stage, to prevent a freeze free-flow. After ascertaining that the ice diving conditions were safe and suitable, Sarah was joined by Jerry Sutton, acting as trainee dive buddy and ice diving novice.

We all watched with anticipation as the pair disappeared beneath the surface of the water and ventured under the ice. The bubbles could be clearly seen through the ice spreading out under the surface. Wayne Murray acted as tender and gave roped communications under the guidance of Ben. Ian Stewart was fully kitted and waited by the entrance, ready to go in if needed as the rescue diver.

The pair soon returned and everyone rotated into their next role, with Ian now taking his turn under the ice and Steve Millard waiting as rescue diver. Steve was the only diver using an Evolution rebreather. In spite of using a more freeze-resistant rebreather, he had some problems with a free-flowing second stage on the rebreather mouthpiece. However this was quickly resolved by pouring copious volumes of hot coffee over the mouthpiece. It was a shame not to drink the coffee but the free-flow was fixed and the mouthpiece retained its nice coffee taste for the rest of the day.

Steve was next under the ice, followed by Wayne and then finally Rachel Hope got her turn to venture under the frozen surface and experience the thrills of this esoteric minority sport. The sixth course participant, Heike Weichert was unfortunately unable to join us under the ice, due to recovering from a recent PFO closure. However she provided moral and Sherpa support and kept our mascot black dog, Masie entertained and quiet.

What was it like under the ice? I have to say that it was an experience not to be missed. Surprisingly, it was not as cold as expected. The water temperature was around 4°C, certainly no worse than other cold water dives I have experienced. It was very light under the ice as it was a sunny day and the sunlight

easily penetrated through the surface covering.

However the most striking impression was of the clear underwater visibility. We had learnt during the course that this was due to all the sediment particles in the water each acting as an ice crystal seed. This resulted in all these particles rising to the surface, leaving exceptionally clear water below. The other striking spectacle was the sight of bubbles rising to the underside of the ice and then flowing out like mercury in all directions. I could easily have watched this for a long time without thinking about the cold. All too soon the time was up and we had to follow the rope back to the exit hole.

Once we had all completed our first ice dive as trainee ice diving buddies, the course was structured so that we would all dive again, but this time taking responsibility as leader to the dive. The second dive was a little more relaxed and we had time to take photographs, try and walk upside down on the ice and generally have fun. Also included in the training was the giving of an emergency signal by the ice dive leader, followed by a rapid pull-out from the dive tender. This was fun - a bit like a fast drift dive but you had to be careful not to hit or snag the ice surface.

Soon, it was all over and we had a hard slog of transporting all the dive kit back to the quarry site entrance and de-kitting. The day never really warmed up and we were all happy to get back into warm dry clothing. After debriefing the dives and swapping photographs in the local Powmill Milk Bar, we set off for our respective journeys back to the extremities of the UK.

All in all it was a very rewarding and satisfying weekend. If you ever get the opportunity to dive under ice then I would thoroughly recommend it. It's

not for the fainthearted but with the right equipment and training it can be done safely and enjoyably. Top marks to Ben and Sarah for all the hard work they put in developing, planning and running this innovative new course.

#### FACT FILE

For further information about ice diving training both in Scotland and Austria, contact Ben Panter: [ben.panter@bsac.com](mailto:ben.panter@bsac.com)

#### Note

Powmill Quarry is located on privately owned land. Anyone planning to dive there should first request permission for diving access with the owner, Roy Ronaldson.



Above: Ice dive tender & overpage: Rope line back to safety



Cutting the ice dive entrance



Coffee fix!