

# WET NOTES

The quarterly newsletter of GUE in the UK

ISSUE 7 OCTOBER 2009



Divers line up, scooters ready to go!

Photo: Underwater Explorers

## From the editor

**Rich Walker**

Welcome to the October 2009 edition of WetNotes, the quarterly newsletter of Global Underwater Explorers in the UK.

This summer has turned into a bumper season for GUE in the UK. It seems to me that events are being organised on a regular basis, more and more diving is being planned and people are getting out there and enjoying their diving.

Divers from the DIRExplorers website have been active in organising dives, as have the new GUE facility, Underwater Explorers down in Portland.

Our article this quarter comes from Liisa Wallace, a long standing GUE member and supporter. A collaboration with Underwater Explorers, Millennium Divers and Silent Planet resulted in a very successful weekend of diving.

We also have an interview with Naomi Sharp. Naomi started diving a few years ago at University and soon got the bug. She's been diving regularly all along the south coast, and has recently completed a GUE Fundamentals course with John Kendall. She gives her opinion on diving in the UK, GUE and some perspective from a relatively new and very enthusiastic, member of our community.

WetNotes still needs regular contributions from around the UK, so if you've done some interesting dives this summer, (and I know you have!) let me know and I'll help you turn it into a short piece for the next issue.

**Rich**

## News: GUE Conference Trip 2009

### UK Divers Visit Florida

After the advert in the last issue, the UK was well represented at the GUE conference. There was a group of about ten divers all heading out and it was a great few days of meeting old friends, seeing news from around the globe and of course some diving in some of the most beautiful caves in the world.

A quick run-down of the programme:

- Project Baseline
- Data collection
- History of JS Haldane
- Worldwide exploration
- CCR rebreather topics
- 3D imaging in science
- Survey workshops

Next issue will have a summary of the conference topics, with a few highlights and funny stories. If those of you who attended want to write something or send me in the odd story or photo, then I'd be very grateful!

# GUE Experience Weekend

## October 31st, Portland, Dorset

By Liisa Wallace

[Underwater Explorers](#), UK's first GUE facility, in conjunction with [Silent Planet](#) organized a Demo weekend in Portland, Dorset, to combine the opportunity for a GUE experience dive and equipment try-outs. The days were structured around a range of subjects with a workshop followed by a sea-dive.

- Two of GUE's UK instructors, Rich Walker and John Kendall, ran sessions for those curious about GUE and had time to complete some fun-dies tech pass upgrades as well.

- Howard Payne led scooter workshops, with Adrian Brown and Rachael Macdonald as the surface support team.

- Martin Davies from Amberley Photographic ran photography workshops.

- Nina Hukkanen, the manager of Underwater Explorers and Ross Finlayson, UE's chief instructor, assisted divers who wanted to try the many equipment options available - not just Halcyon's new Cinch, but also twin-sets of differing sizes, stage cylinders, wings and lights.

- Liisa Wallace, David Wallace and Natalie Charlton from Silent Planet were on hand all weekend to talk and to provide advice where required.

The weekend started on Friday night in the bar of the Aqua Hotel. Disproving the myth

that GUE divers do not drink alcohol was left to a few selfless volunteers.

On Saturday we were blessed with calm weather and good visibility. The scooter and photography workshops had excellent conditions (well... for the time of year anyway...) on the Dredger, and the new walkway on Scimitar Diving's pontoon almost made carrying twinsets a pleasure.

A buffet and several presentations were organized for Saturday night at the Aqua Hotel. Prior to presentations the photo workshop participants all submitted a picture to be voted on by the audience. Stuart Catt won with his picture of a simple subject with great perspective. Presentations were given by:

- Howard Payne on technical diving in Malta illustrated by Gareth Locke's stunning underwater photographs.

- Alison Mayor from Southsea sub-aqua club on the "Tanks & Bulldozers" archaeology project for which she won a Nautical Archaeology Society Award in 2008.

- Richard Walker on the Karst Odyssey Project in the Balkans and the Thresher Shark Research and Conservation Project in the Philippines.



Winning photo in the GUE Experience weekend.

Photo: Stuart Catt



The group has fun on the boat!

Photo: Underwater Explorers

Before eating commenced a raffle was drawn in aid of the Wreck to Reef Project, a non-profit community group behind the push to obtain permissions to source and to sink a ship as an artificial reef off Portland.

On Sunday morning the Gale 8 westerlies put paid to boat diving. However, undaunted, it was decided that the GUE and equipment sessions would move to the local swimming pool. Scooter workshops continued and the dives took place around the Mulberries (WW2 artificial harbours that remained on Castletown Beach after the D-Day landing expeditions).

The event was notable for the number of new faces, unfamiliar to GUE, the friendly, relaxed atmosphere and the enthusiasm of participants. Another event was demanded, so before the weekend had finished a date had been set for next year - October 2nd and 3rd 2010.



Lanny Vogel sets up a new backplate system.

Photo: Underwater Explorers

## News: GUE Experience Weekend 2010

**Put it in your diary! October 2-3rd, 2010**

The dates for the 2010 GUE experience days have been set, so you can get them into your diaries right away. There will be talks about all the diving that's been going on, equipment try-outs, scooter sessions, basic introductory dives and anything else you want too!

## The Interview: Naomi Sharp - GUE diver

### Why did you start diving?

*My housemates at uni were all members of a BSAC club and asked me along to a try dive. I was instantly hooked went along to pretty much every pool session and club dive going. I guess I just love being underwater.*

### You went through the club route for your training, which has some clear advantages. How do you think that compares to the informal groups that GUE divers are starting to develop?

*The advantages of joining my uni club were having the use of club kit when I had none and access to training included in the membership. There were weekly lectures and pool sessions and fairly regular organized dives to book on. It was a good way to start off in UK diving with a nice bunch of people.*

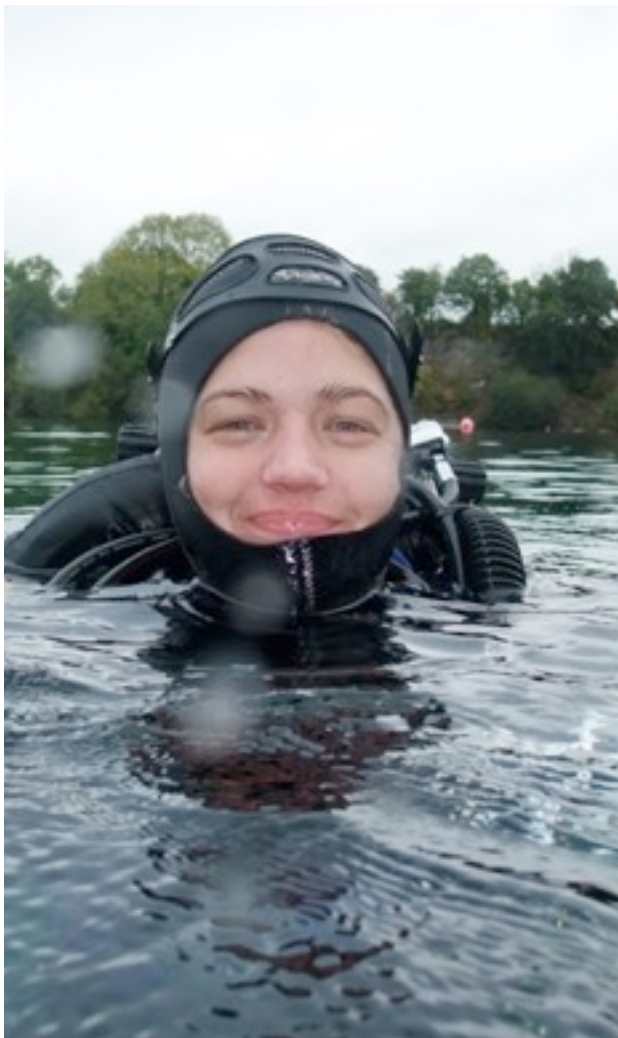
*How does this compare to diving with a bunch of GUE divers? Well, we meet less regularly as there are not so many of us and we are more geographically spread out. However, we have booked and filled boats up with GUE divers through the summer, which is just a really nice relaxed way to dive. Although we do not have weekly access to instructors, we train together as a team or rabble (more than 3). We give each other feedback on and after training dives which means there is still something to learn and improve on every dive and my learning curve has been steep!*

### You recently did a GUE Fundamentals with John Kendall.

### Given that you've been diving within the GUE community for a while before taking the class, how beneficial was the course?

*Having spent the summer before my Fundamentals diving with GUE trained divers up to Tech 1, I had a pretty good grounding in DIR diving before the class. I had practiced fining techniques, learnt some drills, been shown a GUE EDGE and had some idea of team protocols. Now some disapprove of learning such things before Fundamentals in case you learn them wrong but I figured that in order to dive safely and be a useful team member I was, at the very least, going to need to know how to donate gas and do a buddy check with DIR equipment. These essential diving skills are very different to the ones I had learnt in a single cylinder, octopus type rig.*

*So what did I learn on Fundamentals that I hadn't already got from the internet/ my buddies? I made my back kick and turns more effective. I learnt how to do a flutter kick prop-*



Naomi Sharp on the surface after a dive.

*erly. I did my first no mask swim and learnt about how to guide a buddy with no mask on. I also got some good advice about ditching gas out of my drysuit on ascent. Out of the water there was some useful stuff to be learnt in the classroom too. OK so I did not have any "moments of clarity" that some with less exposure to DIR diving have on Fundamentals but more fine-tuning and adding to existing skills and knowledge.*

### What's been your favourite dive so far?

*My 69th dive on the Aeolian Sky this summer, a 150m Freighter with Kev and Banana Joe. We had 15 - 20m visibility, and a whole dive of swimthroughs including a little look around the engine room.*

*Joe put some of the video he took just here <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtsidibzZzc> I am the one with blue arms and a back up light in the wrong hand, flapping my hands about. Really must stop doing that. Bad habits die hard it seems. I think my trim has improved a bit since then anyway. I should point out that this was before Fundies.*

### You seem to enjoy a ride on a scooter. What is it that you like about them? If that's not a daft question!

*It is a bit of a daft question. They are just fun. I like going fast and behaving like a hooligan. Going quick for minimal effort is good. I have not yet had the pleasure of a proper wreck on one but it would be good to do a large wreck like the Sky with a scooter to see it all and get a feel for the whole wreck in one dive.*

### You are one of the few female GUE divers. What do you think the reason is for that, and what can GUE do to fix it?

*I had not really thought about it. The reason is probably that most girls just have different priorities in life and I am not sure GUE can do much to fix that! Free handbag with every Fundamentals maybe? Seriously though, I just think there are just less female divers in general, probably even less at a technical level.*

### People say that it's very expensive to dive in a GUE style, with expensive equipment, training and gasses being required. How do you do it on a budget?

*Well yes, it is expensive, as is all diving. It is an expensive sport. So how have I done it as a student/ on a budget? I have built up my equipment slowly over time, I have borrowed/*



Naomi does her scary Halloween pose

hired the more expensive items such as cylinders and primary light and picked some things up second hand on diving forums. I do not yet drive so it is all about trains and taxis or getting lifts, which is perfectly doable without cylinders.

**As the season winds up, what dives are you thinking about doing next year?**

*I'd like to dive Scapa Flow in Scotland, there are a few unknowns on the south coast we are going to go and have a look at over the winter and next season. I might think about going and diving abroad somewhere like Malta although maybe not next year as I have Tech 1 and some UK mix dives to do first.*

**Do you have a top-tip for a diver who is interested in GUE, but not sure where to start?**

*Go along to a GUE tryout day and have a chat/ go diving with some GUE trained*

*divers and instructors. Register on the various diving forums, ask questions and have a read of the course reports and articles in the archives.*

**What diving projects would you like to see develop in the UK?**

*More unknown wreck identifications.*

**And finally, if you could do any dive, anywhere, no expense spared, what would it be?**

*Caves = Mexico, Wreck = HMHS Britannic with a scooter, Fishy = Galapagos.*

*If I had to choose just one it would be any of the Cenotes.*

**Hint: If you're GUE curious**

**Get in touch!**

If you're interested in GUE, and what it has to offer to your diving, then please do get in touch. You can talk to any of the GUE instructors listed at the end of this newsletter, or just go onto either the Yorkshire Divers forum, or the DIRExplorers forum and ask. Someone will be sure to offer help.

There's also a DIRx event 5-6th December at Vobster Quay, and you can sign up for this on the DIRX web forum.

## Global perspective: Project Baseline: GUE's conservation initiative

By Rich Walker

The article I want to look at this edition is by Todd Kincaid, Vice resident of GUE and director of Research. Project Baseline was also just launched at the GUE conference, so it's a pretty timely article too.

The idea behind Project Baseline is incredibly simple, but as with all clever simple things, can become as complex and deep as you care to take it. Imagine seeing your favourite dive site for the first time. That view would then be your baseline for how you judged whether that place changed over time. So, for example, if a shore dive suffers from pollution, you only know this because the visibility, or the amount of rubbish on the seabed, or whatever, gets worse over a period of years. You compare what you see today with what you remember from your first visit. Now imagine you never visit that site again, but somebody else now visits for the first time. They now view the site with "new eyes" and this becomes the baseline. Over time, the perception of what is "normal" gradually degrades, and without the memory of the people that visited long ago, environmental degradation can go unnoticed.

Project Baseline is GUE's project to combat this "baseline drift". The idea is that divers pick their own favourite dive site and take a picture. They load this picture up to the project, along with the meta data like the time, and date the photo was taken. This process is then repeated daily, weekly, annually or whatever is appropriate and we begin to track any environmental changes. This data will become an hugely important component in any conservation effort as it will be possible to clearly demonstrate how an environment is changing. It's easy to get involved, fun, and has the potential to make a huge impact.

GUE will maintain a central database of all of the contributing projects, and make this available via a range of web technologies and I'm going to expand more on this in the next issue. Individual projects will probably want to expand the work that they do to collect more data and produce more information that described by Project Baseline, and they will of course be encouraged to do this. Links to external websites, contacts and ways to get involved will also be included.

I think the really exciting thing about the project is the way in which different projects will be able to see what each other is up to, to communicate, share ideas and help each other out. It has the potential to become a very rich network of simple conservation minded projects, all with the end goals of documenting and preserving the aquatic environment.

If you have a project that you'd like included, then get in touch with Todd and he will advise you how to move forward.

**GUE members can read Todd's full article in the latest issue of Quest, available for download at [www.gue.com](http://www.gue.com).**



**Rubbish pollutes a dive site**

Photo: Lauri Närenea

## Upcoming GUE Courses

### UK Courses from UK instructors

Tech 1	27 Nov 2009	Bristol	RDW	
GUE F	4 Jan 2010	Plymouth, Devon		BRI
GUE F	15 Apr 2010	Portland, Dorset		JK
GUE F	17 Apr 2010	Plymouth, Devon		BRI
GUE F	22 Apr 2010	Portland, Dorset		RDW
Tech 1	26 Apr 2010	Portland, Dorset		RDW+JK
Tech 1	17 May 2010	Portland, Dorset		RDW
Tech 1	17 May 2010	Portland, Dorset		RDW
Tech 1	26 May, 2010	Portland, Dorset		JK
Tech 1	Jun tbc 2010	Scapa Flow		RDW
GUE F	24 June, 2010	Portland, Dorset		JK
DPV 1	25 Jun 2010	Portland, Dorset		RDW
GUE F	8 Jul 2010	Vobster, Somerset		RDW+JK
GUE F	15 Jul 2010	Portland, Dorset		RDW
Tech 1	21 Jul 2010	Portland, Dorset		RDW
Tech 1	9 Aug 2010	tbc		JK
Tech 1	25 Aug 2010	Portland, Dorset		RDW
DPV 1	30 Aug 2010	Portland, Dorset		RDW
GUE F	9 Sep 2010	Portland, Dorset		RDW+JK
Tech 1	13 Sep 2010	tbc		JK
Tech 1	15 Sep 2010	Portland, Dorset		RDW
Tech 1	22 Sep 2010	Portland, Dorset		RDW
Tech 1	4 Oct 2010	Portland, Dorset		JK

**Full details of all GUE courses can be found at [www.gue.com](http://www.gue.com).**

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### GUE-UK online

The GUE website is up and running, and we now have around 300 people subscribed to the WetNotes newsletter. The website now has an archive area where you can download all of the past issues of Wetnotes. The website also has pages and updates from the various dive groups around the country. If you have any news then please get in touch, and I'll post it up.

**Get online and get involved at:  
[www.gue-uk.com](http://www.gue-uk.com)**