

Got A Story? We Want To Hear From You!

We at SCUBA are often asked how BSAC members can propose news items, announcements and features for publication in the magazine. While it isn't possible to publish everything that lands on my desk, I have plenty of suggestions that can help your club highlight its activities in the magazine. This document will explain how to write stories for SCUBA. Our door is always open to BSAC members, and anyone who wants to drop me a line or give me a bell to discuss projects for publication will always be welcome.

SCUBA Editor

Simon Rogerson

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HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO SCUBA

Announcements for BSAC clubs

If you have a fairly straightforward announcement, the best thing is to draft a press release of 100-200 words and email it to simon@scubamagazine.co.uk. Always be sure to include a primary contact on your side, with email details and a telephone number where we can contact you during the day.

Personal stories and letters

SCUBA has got different sections for different kinds of story. If you'd like to share your observations about diving matters with the wider club, our SCUBA Chat section is an ideal place to start. It's a place to sound off, show off or just make your point. The best letter each month gets a Dive computer. This prize is worth over £500 and if you write a fascinating letter you're in with a very good chance of winning, as well as making your voice heard in this popular part of the magazine. Letters should be no longer than 200 words and can be emailed to simon@scubamagazine.co.uk

Club Focus

This regular page profiles BSAC clubs, their events and achievements. We produce this feature in-house, with professional journalist Kris Pedder interviewing the club. If your club

has a story to tell and would like to be profiled in the magazine, please get in touch and tell us all about it.

Taking Control

Many readers have got more detailed stories about their diving experiences, often incidents that have been traumatic at the time but have ultimately contributed to your understanding of diving. We publish these stories under the banner Taking Control, and we're always on the lookout for more stories to share. In fact, this is the section of the magazine we often use to try out new writers.

Stories should be 700-750 words long, and should have a clear narrative telling the story of your incident, including the context of your own diving experience and qualifications. The last 100 words should contain your own

thoughts of the event, and what you learned from it. Your story will be published alongside a senior instructor's analysis of your incident. Don't worry – this is supportive stuff and not condemning! Prior to writing, you are welcome to ask us for advice and tips – email simon@scubamagazine.co.uk Tel: 0118 327 6902.

Postcards

Every month we will publish photographs of our members out and about. We welcome photographs of people diving, training, posing, eating, drinking, having fun. Don't send us dozens of photographs – just choose one or two that make you smile



Expedition diving

If your club is taking on a particular diving challenge or expedition, there could be scope to publish a feature telling the story. It could be anything from a single page to a five-page feature, depending on the nature of the story and the quality of imaging material you have to support it.

What sort of activities make great features? Well, club expeditions to unusual areas in the UK are very high on SCUBA's agenda. In fact, we are aiming to run one of these every month. We're looking for something a bit different to the standard club trip, such as:

- Trying out unknown sites
- Surveying a particular site of special interest
- Searching for undived or little-known wrecks
- Researching the history of wrecks A search for / study of a particular animal or habitat
- Visiting remote and logistically challenging areas in the UK
- Any UK trip that goes beyond the norm in terms of problem-solving

Wrecked!

As with the Expedition Diving feature, this is one for a group of divers to take on. Every month, SCUBA will publish a big feature on a single shipwreck, complete with photographs, history and a clear schematic. We call it Wrecked. We have a detailed briefing to send out to anyone who wants to research and write a Wrecked feature, so if you're interested just drop me an email and I'll send you the document by email.

Greatest Dive

This is the inside back page feature, one of the most prized slots in any magazine. We want this final editorial page to end the magazine on a positive note, so we have devised this format for anyone to write about a dive that has proven especially memorable or inspiring. You've got between 750 and 800 words to tell your story and explain why your chosen diving experience was so very special. Set the scene, introduce yourself and let the story unfold. We welcome a single supporting photograph with this one-page feature, but it is by no means obligatory.

Travel features

We appreciate that many clubs like to travel, and there is scope to cover club trips as feature stories. Specifically, we are interested in publishing stories in which the club pools its resources to dive independently to explore a foreign location. Straightforward liveboard and resort trips are not really suitable, but if you've got a holiday anecdote to share, the SCUBA Chat pages are ideal. Rather, we want to hear from clubs who have used their skill base and resources to dive as a self-sufficient unit in a foreign setting –essentially a BSAC expedition overseas. It's important to record the problem-solving and logistical aspects of your trip as much as the diving... and of course the provision of quality photography is crucial. SCUBA also generates its own in-house travel copy, and will sometimes issue a call for contributors via BSAC's Facebook presence and via mailouts.

CONTRIBUTORS' ADVICE

Proposing a story

Stories should be sent to me by email. You can contact me beforehand for a few tips on how to structure the story, but I can never commit 100 per cent to publishing until I've seen the completed piece. I am happy to work with you to edit your work in the way that every journalist gets edited. We keep you involved throughout the process, including captioning and final checks on a designed document.

If you think you've got a story that would make a good feature, please put together a brief proposal of around 100 words, and email me a few sample images at low resolution (jpegs of about 200kb each). We can follow this up with a discussion on the telephone.

Your reporting team

As with any BSAC endeavour, you need to divvy out the responsibilities for the task at hand. The first step is to appoint a writer and a photographer.

The writer should keep a comprehensive diary of the expedition, including quotes from the participants on unfolding events. A major feature can be anywhere between 1,400 and 1,800 words in length. Bear in mind we never publish anything longer than 1,900 words, so the trick is self-editing. We ask for work to be presented as a straightforward Word .doc or .docx file, with no embedded pictures or fancy formatting.

The photographer should record every aspect of the expedition, with a view to providing a portfolio of 10 topside and 20 underwater photographs to illustrate the finished article. Of course, you can compile photos from any participating members, so the chief photographer can also act as picture editor and put together a compilation of the best images. Try to avoid the standard group shot with everyone grinning and making 'okay' signals at the camera – instead, take documentary-style photographs of divers prepping kit, in their suits and performing essential tasks.

Photography

In terms of camera hardware, we recommend a modern housed DSLR camera with a wide-angle lens and twin flashes. Alternatively, we can accept images from modern compact cameras with wide-angle lens attachments. Photos taken with digi-compacts without wide-angle attachments are generally too fuzzy to publish.

Photographs should be saved as high-resolution jpegs at your camera's highest quality setting. Web-resolution images cannot be printed in magazines, so please make sure you have a folder of full size images. Please do not email us big image files, as they gum up our server – we'd rather you sent them to the Editor via the file sharing system Dropbox, which can be found at www.dropbox.com. It's a really easy system to use, and works better than all the others.

Writing tips

I don't want to go into the whole stylebook here, but here are a few tips that could be of benefit to BSAC clubs writing for us.

- Keep your sentence structures straightforward – 30 words to a sentence is usually enough. Try to avoid lots of complex sub-clauses. Just start a new sentence.
- If you introduce a fellow member into the narrative, remember that most of the readers will not know who he or she is. So you should write... 'John Smith, the club's training officer and a diver of 20 years, said he had always wanted to dive a whirlpool...'. The idea is to provide a little context to introduce any of your members to the readers
- Fish names don't need to be written in capital letters. So it's a perch, not a Perch. Never be afraid to use the spell check before filing a story!
- Choose a tense and stick to it throughout your story – avoid switching between past and present
- Write in the first person: 'we' when representing the club as a whole, or 'I' when making your own personal observations as a writer
- Magazines like what we call 'page furniture' – think of little information boxes of 100 words or so that can be used to diversify the feature
- We also like maps. Draw up a rough map and we'll have our cartographer produce a version of it to magazine style
- Humour never hurts, but remember SCUBA is intended for a family readership, so keep it clean!
- SCUBA reserves the right to edit any material sent in for publication

Please Understand...

We can be inundated with story proposals, so forgive us if we take a while to get back to you. Sometimes emails can go astray, so it's always worth following up with a second mail or a phone call.

We cannot publish everything we receive, as the magazine has a finite number of pages and our final decisions must be made on the basis of reader value. However we will be as inclusive as possible and will always recommend a way to get published in SCUBA.

Editorial plans can change due to many unforeseen circumstances, with the result that planned publication dates can be delayed. Please bear with us if this happens with your feature. We will do our best to keep you informed.

We like to go diving too, so sometimes we may not be immediately available when you get in touch. The best move is to send an email message; if the matter is urgent please contact one of the other editorial contacts listed here and they will help.

SCUBA Editorial Contacts

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