

BSAC settles over fatal diving incident from seven years ago

THE BRITISH SUB-AQUA CLUB has settled out of court with a woman widowed when her husband was lost with another diver on a BSAC Expedition in 2000.

The claim for negligence and/or breach of contract was brought by Sally Scanlon, who has since remarried, against BSAC and John Williams, who led the one-week

Dorothy Morris, 51, died on the second day of the summer trip, after being paired together for a reef dive and failing to return to the surface.

Dr Haldane, a member of Whittington Divers in Worcester, had taken up diving 15 months previously and was a qualified Sports Diver.

Mrs Morris, a member of Cleveland Divers Club, was more experienced

surface to get to the buoy, descended at or around the time of the buoy's submersion.

Dr Haldane was seen inert at the surface by the dive-boat skipper, nine minutes after the buoy had gone under. John Williams entered the sea to manage his recovery but, despite attempts at resuscitation, Dr Haldane did not regain consciousness.

A post mortem concluded that he had died from asphyxia due to pulmonary haemorrhage from lung barotrauma.

Dr Haldane's BC was lost when it was removed from the diver during the recovery, but his computer was retrieved. He had descended to a maximum depth of 62.7m and ascended at a steady rate to 15m, before ascending more quickly from there to the surface.

Mrs Morris was not found. In March 2003, a skull in a diving hood was recovered by a fishing boat, and DNA tests indicated that the remains were hers. The shot assembly was not recovered.

The inquiry recorded that weighting/buoyancy problems were experienced by both divers on the first day. It was accepted by the Sheriff that, although Dr Haldane had

subsequently reduced his weights, he most probably began the fateful dive "slightly overweight".

It was conjectured that Dr Haldane had taken hold of the counterweight line of the top-tensioned lazy shotline assembly, causing the bottom weights to lift off the bottom and drift off the reef into deeper water. The buoy then sank, unable to support either all the weights on their own, or the weights plus a negatively buoyant diver.

"Did he follow the shotline after it had become displaced and find himself disorientated and in blue water at 62.7m?" said the Sheriff. "One can only speculate."

It was stated that a dive recall by thunderflash or other method would have been a "reasonable precaution" once the buoy had disappeared, evidenced by the fact that people still on the boat shouted at Mrs Morris to abort her dive. This might have saved Mrs Morris, but whether it would have helped Dr Haldane was less clear.

The inquiry heard criticism of various experience assessments related to the expedition; the level of debriefing to tackle problems that had occurred on the first day; and the lack of a thorough internal investigation by BSAC into the incident. ■

THE SHOT BUOY WAS SEEN TO DIP, THEN DISAPPEAR ALTOGETHER

expedition to Scotland's Firth of Lorne.

Hearings commenced on 28 November at the High Court of Justice in Great Grimsby, but were terminated on 30 November when the out-of-court settlement was reached. The sum involved remains confidential.

A settlement relating to the death of the other diver was reached between the diver's family and BSAC at around the time that Mrs Scanlon commenced High Court proceedings in 2005.

Mrs Scanlon's husband, Dr John Haldane, 45, and his buddy, Mrs

and qualified as a Dive Leader.

A Scottish fatal accident inquiry, held by the Sheriff of North Strathclyde, commenced in December 2002 and concluded in June 2004.

The inquiry report, released in 2005, described how Dr Haldane and Mrs Morris, the third pair into the water, were to descend a buoyed shotline to the edge of a reef at 25m. A 45° slope ran on down to 60m.

Dr Haldane was seen to fin beneath the surface from the boat to the shot, after which the shot buoy was seen to dip, then disappear altogether.

Mrs Morris, who was behind Dr Haldane and had remained on the

PUBLISHER HONOURED

DIVER Magazine's Publisher, Bernard Eaton, has received a major award from the British Sub-Aqua Club for his contribution to diving.

The BSAC's Colin McLeod Award – a Gold Medal engraved with the club logo and a citation – was presented to Bernard by BSAC Chairman Marcus Allen. The words on the medal read: "In Recognition For Furthering British Diving Ideals Around The World Through Conferences, Exhibitions And Publications". The presentation took place at an awards dinner at London's Russell Hotel following the club's recent DO's Conference.

A former national newspaper journalist, Bernard has published **DIVER** Magazine (formerly *Triton*) since the 1960s. Following his launch of the renowned Brighton diving conferences in the same decade, he has run more than 40 international diving events, including the annual London Dive Shows organised in association with the BSAC.



Members of the HEPCA team work to secure a mooring line.

RELIEF FOR THE THISTLEGORM

THE THISTLEGORM REOPENED FOR DIVING in mid-December, following what was reported to be a successful operation to help protect the famous Red Sea wreck.

The Hurghada Environmental Protection and Conservation Association (HEPCA) led the conservation operation to install 32 mooring lines and drill air-escape outlets to prevent further damage to the heavily dived wreck. A large amount of trapped air that had been threatening the structure was released in the process.

Further holes will be drilled at a later date, although this will not require additional closure of the site.

Members of the HEPCA diving and mooring team were assisted by volunteer divers and operators including Red Sea Explorers and blue o two. Similar conservation projects are now set for the *Rosalie Moller* and other wrecks under threat, under the Saving the Red Sea Wrecks Campaign launched by HEPCA at the Dive 2007 Show at the NEC last October.