



Learning to dive during Covid

WITH LATEST LOCKDOWN PREVENTING face-to-face training, many clubs are taking advantage of BSAC's eLearning platform to support their Ocean Diver trainees to virtually work through the course's theory.

To inspire current trainees to keep looking forward to when they can finally get to train in open water, SCUBA speaks to 25-year-old Becky Townend, a member of Lancashire-based Lunesdale SAC, who completed her Ocean Diver during last year's first lockdown.

Becky's story

"I am an ex-competitive swimmer and have worked as a lifeguard, swimming teacher, and in swimming pool management, so my life revolves around water. However, I had always wanted to learn to dive so when Lunesdale SAC started using Hornby Swimming Pool after its refurbishment, it was the perfect opportunity.

I had a try dive at the end of 2019 with Lunesdale's Diving Officer, Rob Whittaker and decided to book on their Ocean Diver course planned for the New Year. Then Covid struck, and the course was put on hold.

Then one of the club's instructors, Alf Yates, called to ask if I would like to do the theory side of Ocean Diver through the new BSAC eLearning, which I thought was a brilliant idea. I could do everything at my own pace, take my time on anything I didn't understand, and it also helped to relieve the boredom of lockdown. And Alf was brilliant; if

I didn't understand something, he was on the phone straight away to explain; nothing was too much trouble.

As we had to wait for the swimming pools to re-open after the first lockdown, our pool sessions didn't start until the September. However, I joined another Ocean Diver trainee, Sarah Mulliner, at Rob's house, where we were sorted out with kit, and had the chance to chat about what would happen next. It started to make me feel part of the club.

Eventually, we got into the pool, where we worked around the challenges of Covid – for example, we couldn't test each other's octopus during the buddy checks, so we tested our own. Rob's wife Marie was also on hand with disinfectant at our pool sessions to ensure everything was Covid-safe, which was really reassuring.

It was also so nice to get out and socialise again – socially distanced of course – and hearing other club members tell stories of past dives and dive holidays just made me even keener to qualify.

Our open water sessions came in October. I know Capernwray well, as I go open water swimming there and I was keen to see what was under the water that I hadn't seen from the surface.

Despite the rule of six restricting the number of people who could gather together, I was still made to feel part of the club. I was

paired with Nigel Watson, and although I was nervous, I needn't have worried, and I came out feeling great.

However, on one of my training dives, I had a small blip as my drysuit leaked, I was cold, and I felt restricted by all my kit. It was also costing me every time I went to Capernwray, I hadn't worked for most of the year, so money was also weighing on my mind. Rob took me to one side to make sure I was ok. Until this point, I hadn't quite realised how much Covid

was affecting my life, and I couldn't have asked for a better group of people; without them, I probably would have given in.

Both Sarah and I completed our open water sessions to become Ocean Divers just before the second lockdown in November, so we have yet to dive as qualified divers. But I can't wait to get back diving

with the club as soon as we are allowed to keep progressing.

If there is anything last year has taught me, it's that life is too short, and you never know what is around the corner. We lost our Diving Officer, Rob, suddenly just before Christmas at only 47. Rob truly was an inspiration and helped me so much during my training, and I hope I can make him proud with my diving journey.

I'd also like to say a huge thank you to everyone at Lunesdale SAC who played a part in helping Sarah and I qualify as Ocean Divers during Covid. It meant that 2020 wasn't all bad and I can't wait for what my diving future holds."

For more information on eLearning and the Diver Training Programme theory modules currently available, go to

bsac.com/elearning

To read BSAC's latest guidance on Covid-19 and the current restrictions, as they relate to diving, go to

bsac.com/covidsafediving

"Until this point, I hadn't quite realised how much Covid was affecting my life"

