THE UNDERWATER CENTRE

Newsletter

Summer 2006

Commercial Diver Training | **ROV Pilot Technician Training** | **ALST Training** | **Sea Trials**

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ROV Pilot Technician careers

theunderwatercentre.com

An Interview with Finlay Finlayson, MD of The Underwater Centre

Has there ever been a better time to build a career in the subsea industry? With a very buoyant oil and gas industry worldwide, over the last two years The Underwater Centre has seen an increasing demand for the personnel it trains. Managing Director Finlay Finlayson comments on developments since his company took over The Underwater Centre in 2004.

What have you done since taking over The Underwater Centre?

The Underwater Centre is the original subsea training centre in the UK. This is where the HSE set the world's benchmark in commercial diver training, and we are still the only centre to offer the full range of HSE commercial diver qualifications. It is now also the only place teaching divers and ROV Pilots alongside each other. And that is something we brought back when we re-started ROV training here.

When we first took over we focused our energy on refurbishment and upgrading of equipment on-site. And there has been a lot of investment in this, but we still have much more that we want to achieve.

Another key focus was to recruit the right instructors, people well respected in the industry who could deliver training to meet the career needs of the students.

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ROV Training with New ROV Seaeye Falcon

Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) training courses have been keeping us busy. Since we restarted ROV courses in March 2005 we have trained 44 Pilots for the ROV industry, and so far students have a superb employment record on leaving us.

ROV instructor Paul Bury has found the industry very willing to take on new recruits, and is frequently approached by recruitment agencies.

This market is particularly strong right now, so if you want a job with good prospects and world travel (but don't want to get your feet wet) this might be the career for you.

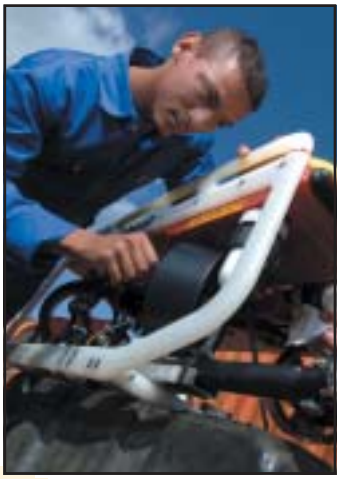
At The Underwater Centre our courses follow IMCA standards equipping you for work in the industry. We offer an electronics course teaching the skills needed to repair and maintain ROVs, and our ROV pilot training gives live flying experience.

New Seaeye Falcon

We recently took delivery of a new Seaeye Falcon ROV to be used in live training.

The Falcon is used by several NATO navies and Special Forces in the Middle East as well as scientists, environmental groups, civil engineers and deep penetration tunnel surveyors.

With a high resolution colour camera on a 180° tilt platform, portable surface control system with video overlay, a low drag umbilical and integral system diagnostics, the Falcon is state of the art engineering. Our students benefit from hours of flying experience in open seawater with a cutting edge ROV.



New Seaeye Falcon with one of our ROV Pilot students

Girls make a splash at The Underwater Centre

Commercial Air Diver Alison Cameron during training at the Centre

The subsea world is not only for the guys. We regularly have women training to become commercial divers or ROV pilots, and some areas of the industry are particularly well suited to women.

Alison Cameron from Stirling completed the Commercial Air Diving course in March. Alison studied forensic science and was looking for an interesting way to use her degree when she came across the idea of commercial diving. Alison told us 'I read in the papers that there was a shortage of commercial divers and jumped at the chance. I'm a keen recreational diver so already have confidence under the water, but I was concerned about being a woman in a very macho environment. However I've nearly finished my course now and the guys, although a bit wary at first, have been really welcoming. I don't see why woman can't join up. I think as women we have unique skills but I guess people can see it as a bit intimidating.'

Alison is keen to get into archaeological diving in Egypt.

Another student, Aurelia Derung, joined our ROV course at the start of the year. Aurelia travelled all the way from France, and would like to use her skills as an ROV pilot to develop multi-media projects, using underwater filming. Until that takes off she aims to make some money and take advantage of good ROV job opportunities.

'I read in the papers that there was a shortage of commercial divers and jumped at the chance'
Alison Cameron

Sea Trials with James Fisher Rumic

As well as providing world-class diving and ROV training, The Underwater Centre is also a location for sea trials and scientific testing projects.

Loch Linnhe provides a sheltered environment for work all year round and has water depths up to 150 metres nearby. Our large private pier provides easy access as well as a host of support facilities, there are also support vessels, equipment and staff at the Centre.

JFR's LR5 Submersible is lowered into Loch Linnhe

One of the world's top submarine rescue companies, James Fisher Rumic (JFR), recently trained crews on their LR5 submersible with us.

JFR provide UK submarine rescue services to the Royal Navy, and they are on constant standby to save the lives of stricken crew and to supply emergency life support stores. In 2005 JFR reached international fame with the dramatic rescue of Russian Priz AS28 submersible. They saved the lives of the seven crew, who were trapped with just 10 hours of air left.

Tom Heron of JFR said: "The Underwater Centre provides us with the ideal location to carry out the advanced training our submersible pilots require. We've trained here in the past and we're delighted to see The Underwater Centre is back offering its dive site for training and sea trials."

Thought about being a Life Support Technician?

The Underwater Centre is known for being the only place in the UK to train to be a closed bell diver. And with demand for closed bell divers worldwide being at an all time high, and with more saturation systems commissioned, there is also high demand for Life Support Technicians (LSTs).

LSTs carry out the vital role of making sure that divers working in saturation systems are operating in safe living

So what is a Life Support Technician?

LSTs carry out the vital role of making sure that divers working in saturation systems are operating in safe living conditions. From outside the compression chamber LSTs monitor factors such as oxygen content of breathing gas, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, pressure, temperature and humidity of the divers' environment to make sure all are at optimum levels.

LSTs come from a variety of backgrounds and there are special courses available to train personnel to internationally recognised standards.

The standard career path for LSTs is to start as an Assistant Life Support Technician (ALST). Once they have gained the experience, qualified ALSTs move on to become an LSTs (also known as Chamber or Panel Operator) and ultimately a Life Support Supervisor.

The ALST course at The Underwater Centre offers particularly good training because courses are held in conjunction with our Closed Bell courses. So students not only learn the theory, they receive hands-on training on a working closed bell system with divers in saturation.

Sat system in Tasmania

Earn £200 per day as a Life Support Technician

Call 01397 703786

to find out more

New KM37 Arrives at Centre

We're delighted to have recently taken delivery of a new Kirby Morgan 37 (KM37). This diving helmet is one of the latest models from Kirby Morgan and allows our students to train on the most up-to-date helmets used in the commercial diving industry. The KM37 has a different neck dam arrangement from the KM17, and with both helmets in use at the Centre students can gain experience of two of the helmets they are most likely to be wearing when they enter the industry.

We have also recently installed a hydraulic powerpack, which provides hydraulic power to tools at depths of 35 metres, giving students plenty of experience of using hydraulic tools at depth.

As you can see in the picture of Jamie, one of our recent students, the new KM37 is now seeing some action.

MOD Training

The Ministry of Defence has returned to The Underwater Centre to use the site for their own training programmes.

The Government originally founded The Underwater Centre in the 1970s. Since then the MOD has frequently used the Centre for diver training.

They have always thought our unique location was ideal. Major Taylor, who heads up Army Training at the Defence Diving School (DDS) said,
"The Underwater Centre provides us with a cost effective training area, outstanding food, good clean accommodation and a friendly professional management team. The Fort William facility has been fully tested and the staff have always managed to react to our last minute requests."

Diver Training barge at the Centre

OPPORTUNITIES AT THE UNDERWATER CENTRE

We are a growing company and we regularly have vacancies for instructors at The Underwater Centre.
Check our website to see current opportunities.

The Underwater Centre was founded in the 1970s by the British Government who selected it as the ideal location for a commercial diver training and underwater trials facility.

Located on the shores of Loch Linnhe - one of the deepest Scottish Lochs - our large private pier gives unrestricted sea access, with water depths of 50 metres nearby and 150 metres within half a mile. Our site provides conditions similar to those experienced offshore, and has a range of underwater structures and wrecks. Unlike most seawater sites our sheltered waters allow operations to continue all year round in almost all weather.

We are the only Health & Safety Executive approved training centre to offer the full range of HSE Commercial Diving courses from Scuba to Closed Bell. And our Career Packages include additional skills training preparing divers for the real experience of commercial diving.

An Interview with Finlay Finlayson (cont. from p1)

How do you know that your training actually meets the career needs of students?

Well, having the right instructors with industry experience is vital. We have that. We have also set up our course packages which include extensive skills training. Our ROV students have their own ROV to work with, and they are able to gain hours of live flying experience in an unpredictable sea loch, which is fantastic real experience. Assistant Life Support Technicians (ALSTs) on-site will work with Closed Bell students tending them in decompression.

We have forged links with industry bodies such as the International Marine Contractors Association (IMCA) to ensure we meet standards required by the subsea industry, and both our diver tools training and our ROV training meets IMCA standards.

The Underwater Centre trains both ROV pilots and divers, but in the industry are ROVs taking over from divers?

"Not at all. Some people are concerned that this is the case but it is not. ROVs enable us to do things that would be too dangerous for divers. They can go deeper, they can work in more dangerous conditions, or go in and observe a site to ensure it is safe for divers. But there will always be a need for real divers in the water.

So the training is good, but is there evidence of students getting jobs when they leave The Underwater Centre?

Back in the 1970's the market for subsea training was buoyant and today there is more demand than ever. The expansion of the oil industry and other specialised fields (including renewable energy) will ensure this trend continues over the next few years. Subsea UK currently predicts the global subsea market will treble by 2008. And it is the busiest anyone I have spoken to can remember it.

The HSE predicted a few years ago that there would be a world shortage of divers. An aging workforce and a growing industry is creating a demographic timebomb, with the industry needing to fill this impending skills gap.

With technological advances ROVs are at the cutting edge of the subsea industry. Advances have made them more flexible and more affordable. Now ROVs are used by environmental organisations, who in the past could not have afforded to use one.

Our training sites here at Fort William and in Tasmania have increased the number of courses available to meet the increasing number of men and women, who are choosing diving as a career.

One of the most satisfying aspects of this work is when students advise us they have found a position and are using their newfound skills to good advantage. And we are now getting a stream of students who qualified with us for the Commercial Air course coming back to do their Closed Bell course, as they progress into saturation work.

There is no doubt there have been many changes here at Fort William since 2003. It was obvious just being around Finlay for the day that he and his team have a real commitment to continually improving the training on offer, ensuring the centre continues to develop in the future

THE UNDERWATER CENTRE

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