

BUDC Trip Report

Malta

March 2019



The 'Maltese Falcons' landed March 3rd and headed for St Pauls Bay in the North West of the Island where Maltaqua are based and provide apartment accommodation. No diving that day so had time to sort out kit. St Pauls Bay is a tourist area with some traditional Maltese buildings still in evidence – they do love a good balcony. Milton managed a scant 3 showers by this point. George began the task of constructing his camera housing.

Diving Day 1 commenced with pickup from the apartment and over to Wied Iz-Zurreiq site in the South of the Island and a rather non-eventful settling-in dive along 'East Reef' at a steady 21m. A sunbathed lunch interval and we were ready for the main event of the day – the Um Al Faroud. At 103 metres this purposely sunk tanker offers the option of a penetration into the stern or a meander up to the bow. Due to a 7min swim from shore dropping onto the stern @ 30m and diving on air the run time was limited. Derek and George penetrated the wreck through the 1st officer's quarters and the rest headed for the bow. A 43min dive with some quite empty tanks back at the surface. We headed back to the drying room at the appartments whereupon Milton managed a further 3 cheeky showers.



Everytime Mark turned away everyone quietly left..



..To be fair Mark could have washed his undersuit before leaving

Day 2 and we migrated onto 30% fills which we were to stick to for the rest of the week. We travelled up to **Cirkewwa to visit the Rozi tug and the P29**, both in around 33-35m. The NNW wind made for a turbulent entry and exit. Regrettably the 'Norm' entry point had been replaced with a large concrete cap so a restaging of his epic entry was impossible – Paul's sole reason for being in Malta was now gone. The Rozi was first up. The P29 was a much more interesting wreck however, again, there was a significant amount of swimmy-travel required which did curtail the run time on the wrecks themselves. Bradford did not



Paul led quite possibly the best dive brief ever, apparently

fully consider the eel-based potential complications to posing sitting on the loo by the following an order from Jenny. Both dives were capped off with a bumble around the coral on our return. An evening attempt at pancake making proved a challenge: how many divers does it take to work a hob?



Derek isn't helping with the hob, he just stood about a lot looking at the floor

We disappeared back to Wied Iz-Zurreiq after dark for a night dive at blue Grotto. This proved a very popular dive amongst the group with several large Octopi on the hunt.



Day 3 and we found ourselves in Gozo to take on **Inland Sea** and **Blue Hole** (sans Azure Window). Both proved welcome relief after the submerged wreck dashes the previous day. Blue Hole lived up to its billing - the rubble from Azure Window providing a rich home for life around the reef.



I think we could have all done without seeing Paul & Milton's blue holes

7 showers today for Milton. Enquiries from other tenants about a lack of hot running water.

Day 4 Saw the Maltese Falcons turn their steely gaze to **Valetta harbour** and an impressive show of balconies and HMS Maori with a distinguished role in being one of the vessels engaging the Bismark during her sinking. The sheer weight of Georges camera buckled the steel railings at the entrance to the dive. The Maori proved a very enjoyable dive with only the front section remaining. Dive two involved X127 used as a lighter during the Gallipoli campaign and sunk during an air raid during WWII with the bomb hole clearly visible on her port side. Viz was not great but some artefacts recovered. In restricted conditions Derek was lost for a short period, we're not sure what he was doing when found about apparently the fish won't come to the surface any longer.



A happier time before Jenny got us all lost in the sand. Naturally it was nothing to do with the author

Day 5 and a gentle boat ride to Comino. P31 was first up. Sister ship to the P29, she sits upright in 20m of water skipper dropped the shot straight over her and we were encouraged to search off site for rays. For many, probably the most



enjoyable dive of the week – very relaxed. Those seeking to leave the ship relying on a bearing to return should be encouraged not to take the initial bearing while sitting on the bow of the large metal wreck but all were eventually gathered up. Second dive were the Crystal caves which were a beautiful network of short caves and tunnels.



Day 6 allowed one last trip to the Um Al Faroud for a hard core of elite, toughened divers for an extended bumble through the rudder and then up into the engine room, kitchens and sleeping quarters. Max depth topped out at 35m. The team were liberally equipped with stages, including a cameo from an 18ltr cylinder no less. Quietly, the team don't talk about the fact that a young lady that joined the group managed the surface on a 12ltr with 50bar remaining. If anyone still reading this wants to start a fight between two reasonable people, just ask Mark



if he saved Milton's life AGAIN.

George finally finished putting his camera housing together.

So – **12** dives, **478** showers, **4** salvageable pancakes, **7** rather smelly undersuits & **43** pints of Guinness , **3** arguments about Brexit & **4** lbs of German Sausage meat, **10,000** balconies & **3600** kgs of baggage concluded the Maltese Falcon's trip to Malta in 2019. We found the setup at Maltaqua good with convenient and cheap accommodation, drying facilities and daily pickup. I think it's fair to say we had a scream and that for endless videos and photos a cloud facility near you is a must, with hits including *Milton's bom-chikka-wow-wow sun cream application*, Mark and Milton dancing cheek-to-cheek, Paul exposing himself to the entire Island, George in full beast mode on the Comino boat & by popular demand 7 jump into Valetta Harbour, get out and promptly do it again.

No Columbians were harmed in the making of this holiday

