

**CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY AIR SQUADRON
EXERCISE LANZAROTE LANDFALL**

19th TO 30th MARCH 2018

**ADVENTUROUS TRAINING (SUB-AQUA) EXPEDITION TO PLAYA
CHICA LANZAROTE**

POST EXPEDITION REPORT TO THE ULYSSES TRUST - ID 02357



1. INTRODUCTION

A total of 12 people participated in a sub-aqua expedition to Lanzarote from 19th to 30th March 2018; 8 Cambridge University Air Squadron (CUAS) students, 3 Diving Instructors and the Officer Commanding CUAS. The expedition was named Exercise LANZAROTE LANDFALL. The exercise was planned, organised and run by the CUAS students.

2. AIM

The primary aim for this expedition was to develop teamwork by placing individuals into an unfamiliar and demanding environment; one where the team needs to be self-sufficient for the Adventurous Training (AT), conduct and safety elements. The expedition sought to broaden and enhance the students' learning capability, through a rigorous ten-day diving schedule which is designed to challenge the student both physically and mentally in an unfamiliar environment at the same time as progressing skillsets, learning new talents and gaining valuable qualifications.

To succeed individuals would be taught and acquire through training, a skillset encompassing leadership, co-operation, respect, physical courage, understanding and good communication. These attributes will benefit each member in day to day working life and would be especially beneficial to students planning to join the RAF as a future career given the operational nature of military employment.

All individuals would lead events and parts of the expedition to encourage them to exercise their leadership skills. The daily demands of the expedition would involve students and instructors working in small teams in a domain where exemplary communication is required. Individual students with varying skill levels will develop their knowledge in dive planning, dive management and the actual physical skill of operating dive equipment successfully. Dives would be both shore and boat based and would increase in level of difficulty as the expedition progressed. The expedition will operate from the Safari Diving Centre at a small cove area named Playa Chica.

An additional aim was for students to work through the British Sub-Aqua Club (BSAC) syllabus, providing newly-qualified Ocean Divers and Sports Divers with the necessary experience, knowledge and technical skills required to progress up the qualifications ladder. The squadron's resident Sports Divers and Dive Leader (qualifications gained from the previous year's dive expedition) would act as rescue divers to assist on instructional dives and develop their experience in facilitating training; thus, aiding future squadron expeditions with qualified rescue divers/leaders and rewarding commitment to the RAF and the unit. Additionally, 5 complete novices would be trained to Ocean Diver level, expanding the number of qualified personnel on the squadron. The diving would take place in an array of contrasting environments including; shore, wrecks, walls, reefs, open water and small cavern dive sites either during the day or at night. To complement this practical experience a range of theory lessons would be provided, along with daily learning reviews to ensure immediate improvements are made and proficiency is consolidated.

The benefit such AT gives an individual and the organisation is tremendous - it will equip all members with a greater exposure to 'real risk'. It will contribute to members developing personal leadership and followership skills which will assist in any life domain but particularly in a future RAF career.



The aims are summarised as follows:

- a. Develop individual courage and leadership skills through controlled exposure to risk in a challenging outdoor environment to enhance operational capability.
- b. To promote leadership skills and foster team spirit in a challenging and adventurous environment.
- c. To train qualified divers as Ocean Divers, Sports Divers or Dive Leaders depending on previous experience and qualifications.
- d. To carry out world class diving in a unique and challenging environment.
- e. Build experience and further develop divers' knowledge, skills and proficiency in dive planning, organization and management.
- f. Effective communication skills and models will be explored theoretically on land before being observed in the heightened pressure underwater environment.

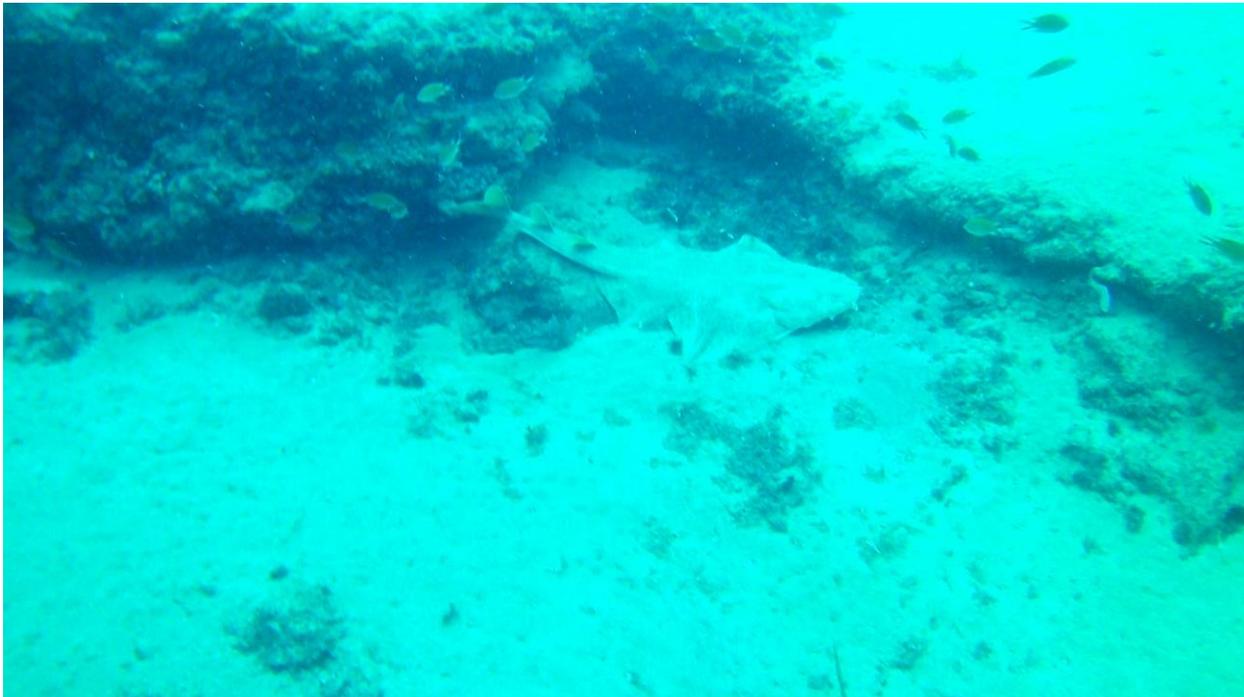
- g. Learning will be related to the participant's current studies and onto future experiences either in the RAF or public domains.

3. PLANNING

An application to return to Ascension Island for the 2018 CUAS expedition was made in July 2017 and work begun using this venue and the experiences learned from the 2017 expedition. However, in Dec 17 the unit was informed that Ascension Island would not be available due to operational issues with the runway and restrictions to non-operational members visiting the island. A quick reshuffle was required and the team got together to decide if changing venue was an option considering the proximity of this information to the planned expedition departure date. After much deliberation and consultations with various diving instructors Lanzarote was chosen as a venue as it closely mirrored Ascension Island and had the potential to deliver all the aims. Rapid planning ensued and post successful identification of 3 SADS (Diving Instructors) volunteers, the student attendees were chosen by the Officer Commanding. Previous CUAS commitment, contribution, attendance and loyalty were all attributes considered during this selection process. Hand in hand with this work were the applications for financial assistance/grants. Without these generous and tremendously valuable donations such expeditions, training and personal development would not be possible. Unfortunately, again this year we (CUAS) were unsuccessful with a RAF Sports Lottery grant application as their regulations remain unchanged – UAS students deemed not be eligible. Thankfully however, our application to Ulysses Trust was successful and we were awarded a grant of £1200. As one can imagine, sub aqua activities are reasonable technical and therefore attract a fair amount of cost; hence, this grant from the Ulysses Trust was invaluable as it meant the individual contribution from attendees (who are students with no earnings) could be reduced to acceptable levels to enable the expedition to go ahead.



A phenomenal amount of organising needed to be achieved in a relatively short period now, with daily working/studying cycles also to be adhered to. Under the direction of the Officer Commanding the student attendees arranged a plethora of details including; flight, hire vehicle and accommodation booking, equipment loan (from several sources throughout the UK), purchase of necessary training packs and documentation, compiling detailed itineraries, training schedules, kit lists, applying for clearances, approvals, diving medical appointments and certification. This ongoing process took only 2 months to finalise with several hurdles to overcome but with sound perseverance the team adapted their plan into a workable solution. It must be said that achieving this task in such short notice was testament to many of those skills mentioned earlier already being displayed.



4. SUPPORT

Clearly such an involved expedition requires a huge level of support from external agencies for it to be officially sanctioned and authorised. The Force Development Cell within Headquarters No.6 Flying Training School were exceptionally helpful, as were the Adventurous Training Department in Headquarters No 22 Group. Particular thanks must go to the British Embassy staff in Spain who rushed through the Diplomatic Clearance request in much shorter timescales than desired. Nonetheless, this expedition would not have succeeded without the financial support from the Ulysses Trust.

Transport. Easyjet airline was utilised for the transport from Luton to Recife airport. On arrival, the Officer Commanding collected the hire vehicle and ferried all staff and students to the accommodation.

Accommodation. The expedition was accommodated in self-catering apartments located a short walk from the Safari Dive Centre. Personnel were allocated 4 x 3-man rooms; sparsely accommodated with 2 x beds and one sofa bed with a small kitchenette (with minimal cooking utensils) to facilitate cooking.

Food. All meals were self-catered with 2 CUAS students overseeing all sourcing, purchase and cooking instructions. The challenge of lack of a full range of cooking utensils was overcome by some creative menus and adaptation. A fine effort was displayed and all personnel cooked and ate well for the duration of the expedition.



5. ACHIEVEMENTS

Despite not having had the time in the UK beforehand to practice drills in a swimming pool and gain initial familiarisation with the diving equipment, the diving progressed well in week 1 and by the end of that period the 5 novice divers were awarded their Ocean Diver status post successful waterborne test and theory test. One day of novice sea diving was lost due to sea swell, however we managed to utilise a local swimming pool that day for additional safety drills. Morning and evening lectures continued throughout the first week with all personnel progressing very well. Into the second week we took advantage of the Safari Dive Centre boat and could travel to different and more challenging dive sites to further progress students' skills. The expedition culminated with a total of 190 dives and almost 5800 minutes underwater being achieved. This was an excellent achievement. All the planned BSAC training was delivered in accordance with the BSAC syllabi and expedition aims. There were no diving incidents during the expedition.

Training. Training was one of the primary aims of the expedition. Five complete novices were trained to and completed the BSAC Ocean Diver qualification; progress was made by 3 Sports Divers towards the BSAC Dive Leader qualification and the Dive Leader towards the BSAC Open Water Instructor qualification – a massive success. On the non-diving days (mandatory off-gassing' periods) students and staff conducted historic, cultural and operational visits learning about the islands history, culture and visiting volcanic areas and national parks.

6. CONCLUSION

Despite the late notice change of venue and some complications regarding transport, baggage and lack of pre-expedition pool training prospects, Exercise Lanzarote Landfall was a resounding success and achieved all the aims to which it aspired. This expedition has introduced several novices to sub-aqua adventurous training and developed the skills of the more experienced expedition members. The nature of sub-aqua activities, reliance on equipment etc. brought several issues to the attention of the students, such as the importance of looking after one's equipment properly, being attentive to detail and teamworking to achieve a goal. It taught about the need for robust planning and anticipation of potential incidents early in the diving careers of expedition personnel. Expedition members also gained an understanding of military deployed operations through interaction with the military and civilian personnel involved with this expedition from planning to completion. The skillset developed throughout the entire expedition process sets a fine grounding for the younger generation of future residents and leaders of the UK (military and civilian). These immensely valuable traits would be difficult to gain by non-adventurous training means. Without the support of organisations like the Ulysses Trust this phenomenal achievement would not be possible.





EXERCISE LANZAROTE LANDFALL – STUDENT DIARY

Day 0 - Sunday 18th

Everyone arrived at RAF Wittering and made sure all equipment was checked along with medical forms and travel documents.

Day 1 - Monday 19th

Met at 0300, loaded the MT minibus and drove to Luton airport. Checked in around 0500, we had a minor issue with luggage as the excess baggage allowance only covered 20 bags and we had 21 so the Boss had to pay for an extra bag. We got through and boarded our plane which flew at 0655, landed at 1115. We picked up the 9-seater hire car, dropped off our kit at the accommodation and bought groceries for the week according to Alex's meal plan. Later, we walked the local area to source the dive centre and locations for the following day.

Day 2 - Tue 20th

Lectures in the morning for the novice divers (Alex, Jack, Leon, Robin, Vinny) taught by Ken, the experienced divers (Boss, Barley, Finn, Paul) went on a morning dive shake down

dive with Misty. After our packed lunch, we all went down to Playa Chica for the novices first dive; going through kit and equipment and basic drills. Robin and Vinny were instructed by Sam and the other three taught by Ken. Some of the group saw an angel-shark, and the experienced group explored a cave 30m deep. After diving we bought some more groceries and made chicken pesto pasta for dinner. The rest of the evening was spent participating in a local quiz.

Day 3 - Wed 21st

The novices had their last lot of lectures but didn't get to dive at the beach due to choppy conditions so we continued our drills in the hostel swimming pool which met the intended aim. The experienced group checked out a dingy wreck in the morning and a pier dive in the afternoon lead by Finn. For dinner, everyone cooked paella which was a very tasty success. In the evening, we sat around in one of the rooms having a good laugh. Robin also agreed to let us give him a haircut, which although was rather short but turned out well.

Day 4 - Thu 22nd

Morning brief was at 0930, and then we had our morning dive at around 1030 and second at 1300. The novices went through the SEEDS brief and BAR checks and in the water performed the mask clearance and Alternate Supply drill. This was their first proper dive and got to explore some rocks and marine life, including an octopus! The experienced group split up and joined the novice groups, apart from Finn and Misty who went off to dive deeper. The whole group had a general admin chat back at the hostel and then got refreshed before dinner. The rest of the evening was spent playing word games.

Day 5 - Fri 23rd

The groups had reshuffled so that Finn and the Boss were safety divers for the novices and Barley and Paul went diving with Misty off the boat where they saw a sting ray and huge sea urchins! Robin and Vinny completed their first dive lead and so had done all the practical requirements and then passed their exam later that afternoon to become qualified Ocean Divers. After diving all the students went to a beautiful stretch of beach where Vinny showed off his impressive Ultimate Frisbee skills.

Day 6 - Sat 24th

Paul, Finn and Barley dived with Misty in the morning and saw an angel shark. The three remaining novices split up now that Sam was free to help instruct, and they completed their practical training. Robin and Vinny went with the Boss on the boat to explore a different boat wreck. Jack, Alex and Leon sat their Ocean Diver exam but unfortunately Leon didn't pass first time. In the evening as there were no theory lessons, we took the opportunity to explore the local area.

Day 7 - Sun 25th

Due to having done four days of continuous diving we had to have a 24-hour period of no diving so our first dive wasn't until 1300. Everyone buddied up and went to their respective

depths, some buddies even explored a cool cave underneath the pier. Leon passed his retake exam and became a qualified Ocean Diver. After that, time was our own until the night dive! All the students buddied up and explored the marine life at night, there were a few more fish and Barley and Robin saw a large octopus. Night diving was an amazing experience that we all, especially the novices, really appreciated our training and skills – when you can only see what is in your torch beam, whilst being underwater really concentrates the mind.

Day 8 - Mon 26th

Everyone got the chance to go on the boat and explore the wreck beneath. Everyone also saw huge sting rays and a few sharks! The second dive was brilliant too, most people went into the cavern underneath the pier. Vinny and Jack also got up close with a big barracuda and a grouper! Leon had a nightmare and lost his mask and his GoPro, thankfully he managed to retrieve the GoPro.

Day 9 - Tue 27th

We all got on the boat for the first dive which dropped us off along the reef to the East. There were a few octopuses hidden and loads of trumpet fish. The second dive was a nice casual dive around the shore of Playa Chica. In the evening, Finn, Barley and Vinny went for a lovely stroll along the beach and had a chuck about with the frisbee.

Day 10 - Wed 28th

Our last day of diving. We unanimously decided to do three dives today to maximise our training. The first dive was at the wrecks; Vinny and Robin got ridiculously close to a couple of huge Rough-tail Stingrays! On the second boat dive along the reef there were loads of small Round sting rays and a couple of angel sharks. The third dive was back along the shore; most pairs saw a barracuda and octopus. We gathered all our kit and washed it thoroughly and left it to dry on our balconies. We then cooked some unbelievable burgers.

Day 11 - Thu 29th

This day was mostly spent washing, drying and packing our equipment ensuring all was in good order for the return journey. Alex, Barley, Finn and Robin took a bus to the national park on the other side of the island and walked down a long road (good Nijmegen practice) to explore the volcanoes. We all gathered together for a barbeque by the pool for our final meal. We announced the awards of the exped and presented the instructors with their gifts; the gifts were a bit underwhelming but we couldn't find anything that good. Nevertheless, we all had a good laugh. The students then sorted all the scuba kit for the mornings transport.

Day 12 - Fri 30th

We met in the morning to check out at 0900. We got a coach to the airport and checked in. We signed the exped Fedora as a memento to keep at THQ. We eventually boarded the plane at around 1320 and landed safely back in the UK. Then the hard work of returning all

the kit began. Once back at RAF Wittering the Boss took all the kit into his house so he could return it to Bicester the following week. We all then departed via various means to return home and begin revision for our uni exams.

This expedition was excellent. The students learned so much and are all extremely grateful to the staff and instructors. We all gained excellent experience of leadership, followership, team working, communication skills, coupled with tests to our ability to formulate and organise plans with continually changing parameters.

Our sincere thanks go to all those external agencies who provided much sought after funding to enable us to gain such immeasurable qualifications and skills. Without your superbly kind assistance this would simply not be achievable.

A copy of our short expedition video is at the following link:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1mOggf5dKtEiRIHQYYI7APOIvV7DFRWNN>



Dive statistics (minutes)

Name	Total Minutes Diving	Total Number of Dives
KELLETT	351	12
BOTT	564	18
COLLIER HARRIS	574	18
BASELEY	521	18
HEDLEY	520	16
WARNER	501	18
RAYMENT	503	16
CHEUNG	436	15
MANN	514	16
ISTANCE	406	14
SCOTT	467	14
GOODWIN	443	14

Total dives 190

Total time (mins) 5800

V. Mann, J. Rayment, A. Warner, R. Hedley and L. Cheung all gained their Ocean Diver qualification.

WHAT I LEARNED FROM EXERCISE LANZAROTE LANDFALL – Officer Cadet Alex Warner

I have been a member of Cambridge UAS for only 5 months and have thoroughly enjoyed every facet of my time on the squadron. I had no idea I would get the opportunity to experience an overseas diving expedition with this organisation when I joined and did not expect to be in such a position so early into my membership. I certainly had no clue what I would gain from such an expedition.

I am a reasonable swimmer but had never attempted any sub aqua activity before. The surreal environment became rapidly clear to me on day 1 when part of my training was to just place my head underwater with a mask on and my regulator in my mouth and take 3 breaths. I panicked and could only manage 1 breath. It took a short while to get used to this unusual feeling but with the excellent teaching, guidance and direction of the instructors I was able to progress well. By the end of the first week I was leading my buddy diver to a depth of 20 metres for around 30 minutes underwater. When I look back now I am absolutely amazed at how much I have learned. Not only about myself and being able to push my comfort zone boundaries but how to manage and lead others in a rather unique environment.

Whilst we were away, my secondary duty was to be responsible for all the food. This again was quite daunting – having to supply food, instructions etc. to 12 people all with different likes and tastes. Before departure I took lists of food likes and dislikes and prepared a sample menu and sought approval from the expedition members. With a few tweaks that was finalised. I then prepared cooking instructions so that those without any cooking experience could follow and hopefully muddle through to a solid meal with no risk of food poisoning. My next challenge came when we found the local supermarket – I had not appreciated that the food stocks would be different and that quite a few of my items were not available. I ended up having to alter menus to fit with food availability. With a little help from a couple of the others we sorted it and all feedback from the students and the Boss was very positive.

I made a list of areas that I have learned new skills / developed in:

Leadership

- Setting a good example (not complaining and staying positive)
- Looking after your team (food, water, buddy checks)
- Maintaining morale (don't show your concerns and keep them motivated)

Teamwork

- Pushing your teammates (but not too far)
- Responsibility to stay positive (needed for morale of the team)
- Trusting your leaders (even when you doubt yourself)

Personal Development

- How I react to pressure and the unknown
- The difference between my mental and physical limits
- The value of good leadership and having a strong team
- The importance of not giving up
- The importance of preparation and training

In summary, the skills I have learned in a very short time period because of the nature of this expedition have given me the confidence, ability and enthusiasm to strive to better myself in whatever I do. I am extremely grateful for everything the UAS organisation has given me and undoubtedly I am a better individual for it.

This outcome could not have been achieved without the support (especially financial) of external organisations such as the Ulysses Trust. My wholehearted thanks go to them and all the others.

