

Editorial

Close encounters

I had a close encounter a couple of weeks ago and it brought out a mixed reaction in me.

We've had a lone male dolphin in the area, on and off, for a few years now. Not regular enough to generate a tourism industry but it's always a pleasant surprise to see him playing in the bow wave.

On this particular day he surfaced by the boat as I was kitting up and, in hindsight, I'm rather glad he did. I descended to the seabed at 17 metres; a thick plankton bloom had reduced the visibility to less than a metre and it was gloomy. I was testing the excellent F.I.T LED 2400 light but all it did was bounce its very bright light back off the plankton and actually made it harder to see.

I turned the light off and waited for my eyes to accumulate before setting off on a reel line from the anchor to feel my way around in the hope of a scallop or two for tea.

The next 10 minutes resulted in no scallops but I was preparing myself mentally for a visit. I thought I saw something flash by in the gloom but I wasn't certain.

Ascending to my safety stop

the plankton was just as thick and as I slowly turned round there was a big stationary beak virtually touching my mask. What I would have done had I not seen it on the surface previously is anybody's guess. Fortunately I had turned round quite slowly so the appearance wasn't jarringly sudden but the presence of such a large male dolphin was very arresting. I slowly pulled back to look into his eye and then up to his battle scarred body.

This was not the Caribbean perfection rather the street urchin; the survivor of a lifetime of scrapes and then I realised something. There was no sound other than my bubbles. No happy squeaking and even the fixed smile seemed to have disappeared. It actually felt very intimidating but fortunately my time was up and I slowly made my way to the surface with no sudden movements and he followed me much to the delight of those on the boat.

This particular specimen is nicknamed 'Nothcy' after the distinctive notch in his dorsal fin and it turns out that a year previously he had been delighting a small group of bathers until he got a bit boisterous with one of the women. As so often happens excitement turns to fear and she made a rushed exit up the boat ladder. This annoyed Notchy who became agitated and rammed his beak into one of the mens thighs.

I was e mailed a photo of the bruising which covered the whole thigh.

Fortunately the plankton bloom is receding but knowing what Notchy is capable of makes me very wary of another close encounter.

Hans Hass RIP

It is sad to report the death of diving pioneer Hans Hass at the age of 94 on 16 June 2013.

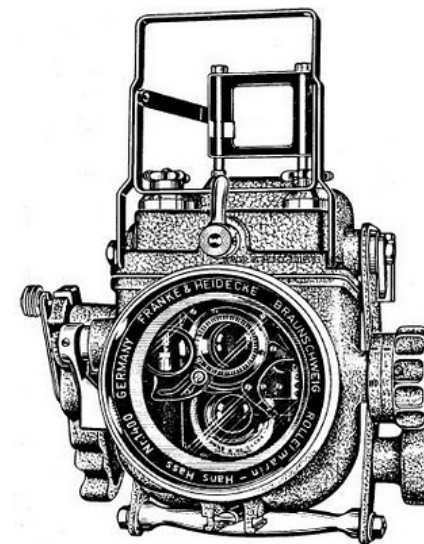
He and his second wife Lotte were the inspiration for a whole generation of new divers into the sport at a time when it was still evolving.

He produced 4 cinema films, about 70 TV documentaries and over 25 books during his long and active career.

Often overshadowed by Jacques Cousteau with his more entertaining and better financed productions, Hans was instrumental in oxygen rebreather technology with a set developed for him by German diving manufacturers Dräger.

The Hans Hass Rollei Marin housing was designed by German engineer Richard Weiss for Franke & Heidecke in 1953.

The Rolleimarin housing was specifically designed to house the Rolleiflex F3.5 medium format camera, and they were a perfect



combination despite the camera being probably one of the most difficult to design a housing for!

The Rolleiflex, with its very high quality optics, combined with the 2 1/4 inch square negative provided breath taking sharpness and detail in photographs.

The photographic precision of the camera housed in the comparatively compact and highly portable Rolleimarin became, for many years, the standard for professional photographers worldwide, and photographs taken with this system have graced the pages of many of the world's most prestigious publications.

Thank you and RIP Hans Hass.

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