

Greek salad days

A 2400-YEAR-OLD SHIPWRECK in the Mediterranean has thrown up a fascinating nugget of information about the ancient Greeks' culinary habits.

While, according to Shakespeare, Queen Cleopatra was mourning her youthful "salad days", in which "green judgment" had led to a regretted affair with Julius Caesar, her people were, it seems, enjoying real salads.

DNA analysis of the inner surfaces of two amphoras, recovered in 2005 from the wreck of a trader lying in 70m off the Aegean island of Chios, has established that, while one probably held wine, the other contained olives and oregano.

The oregano would almost certainly have been mixed in with the olives to give a distinctive flavour. This would have enhanced salads and other foods eaten raw, along with a number of fried dishes. The oregano would also have helped preserve the oil during shipment and storage.

The recoveries and research were carried out by the Woods Hole

Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts, USA.

Researcher Brendan Foley told US media that the find had established that Chios's agricultural production at that time "might have been more sophisticated than we've suspected". It had been thought that the island produced only wine.

It is hoped that the breakthrough DNA analysis technique – in which the original content of a seemingly empty amphora can be identified – will help build a more accurate picture of regional production and trade, as artefacts from other wrecks are studied. The research team is to analyse several dozen more amphoras recovered from wrecks in the Aegean.

"We can see what crops were grown where and when, and this will give us an entirely new look at the ancient economy," said Foley. "We can see what they were growing, what they were eating and how they prepared and preserved foods."

A project report is to appear in the *Journal of Archaeological Science*. ■

'Churchill's Pirates' at Shipwreck Conference

A REGULAR EVENT IN THE DIVING CALENDAR takes place on Saturday, 9 February in the shape of the one-day International Shipwreck Conference in Plymouth, organised by the International Maritime Archaeology & Shipwreck Society.

The line-up of speakers set to appear includes Mike Bowyer and diver/TV actor Mark Wingett on "Churchill's Pirates – WW2 Armed Trawlers", the story of HMS *Caxton Wyke* and the sinking of the German submarine *U16*.

Other presentations include "Mapping Our Shipwreck Heritage" (Richard Larn and Alan Jones); "A Scientific Strategy for In-situ Stabilisation of Wreck" (Paola Palma); "WW2 U-Boats off the Turkish Black Sea Coast" (Selcuk Kolyay); "The Lost Submarines of the Dardanelles Campaign – Gallipoli" (Savas Karakas) and "The Future of Red Sea Wrecks" (Natalie Elliot/Jason Strickland).

The conference takes place at the Robbins Conference Centre, University of Plymouth, and tickets cost £15. For details, visit www.shipwreckconference.org ■

Help mark MCS anniversary

THE MARINE CONSERVATION SOCIETY celebrates its 25th anniversary as a marine-life protector this year.

To mark the landmark, the MCS is running a series of events and initiatives to "highlight the need for better protection of our seas, celebrate the wildlife they support and give opportunities for people to take an active part on land or at sea".

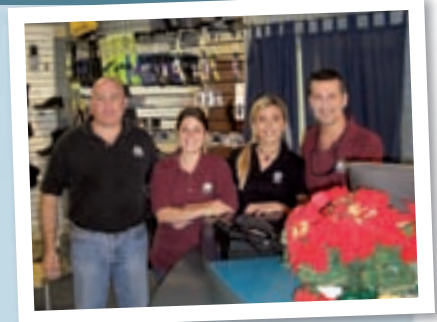
As part of the programme, the MCS is inviting people to contribute sea-related accounts or images that

reflect the value of the marine environment and the need to preserve it to the MCS Silver Jubilee Gallery.

"One of the key themes for the Silver Jubilee is people's relationship with the sea and coast – their fondest memories of the sea, what the sea means to them and how the sea and coast has changed in the last quarter century," says the Ross-on-Wye-based charity.

To find out more, go online at www.mcsuk.org ■

MYSTERY DIVER



PRO DIVE, FLORIDA

THERE ARE SEVERAL outfits across the world with the name Pro Dive, but according to Kelly from Pro Dive in Fort Lauderdale, Florida: "We were the first. The rest? They try and copy us."

I remember Pro Dive's ads in the US diving media from 20 years ago. Kelly was right, it has been around for a long time. It was also PADI's very first Career Development Centre.

So why would a UK diver choose America for a course? Simple – the weak dollar.

So would Pro Dive be worth the spend for a divemaster to instructor course? Could Mystery Diver achieve the dream of working at a tropical dive resort?

The centre's shop is perfectly located one block from Fort Lauderdale beach, with its own private dock in one of the lagoons.

As soon I entered I was greeted by an employee, and I explained that I wanted to learn to be a dive instructor. Kelly, the Director of Career Development, was called in, and started by asking pertinent questions about my experience, qualifications and what I hoped to achieve once I qualified.

Only then did he provide an overview of what each course I needed to attend would involve.

Next, a guided tour. We started with the centre's dive boat, and an explanation of how lessons are not structured only around boat diving. "We run our sessions in a variety of locations, not just off a boat," I was told. "We have to remember that many of our students will go on to work from

inland sites and shore-based locations."

The tour continued to the main building, where I was able to sit in on two sets of lectures. The quality of instruction and the supporting equipment were excellent.

I was especially impressed by the Resort Operation Specialist programme, 13 modules designed to provide all the skills required by a busy PADI dive centre, from DAN emergency courses and equipment-servicing to dive-centre operations.

Kelly seemed very proud of the ROS. "This is individual to Pro Dive, so much so that we were able to trademark it," he said.

And there it was, on the wall of his office, the USA Trademark certificate for the ROS, together with two others I couldn't quite make out – impressive.

Kelly spent more than an hour of his day with me. He asked intelligent questions about my background and my dreams, and provided advice on how I could achieve them.

The structure of the courses is impressive, each one designed to blend seamlessly into the next.

The operation as a whole? One of the most professional I have come across. The icing on the cake? If I passed each course on my way to becoming an instructor, Pro Dive's placement service guarantees me a job at a respectable dive centre at locations across the world.

With the weak dollar combined with Pro Dive's approach, I would certainly recommend it to budding instructors.