

## Siebe-Gorman Diving Suits

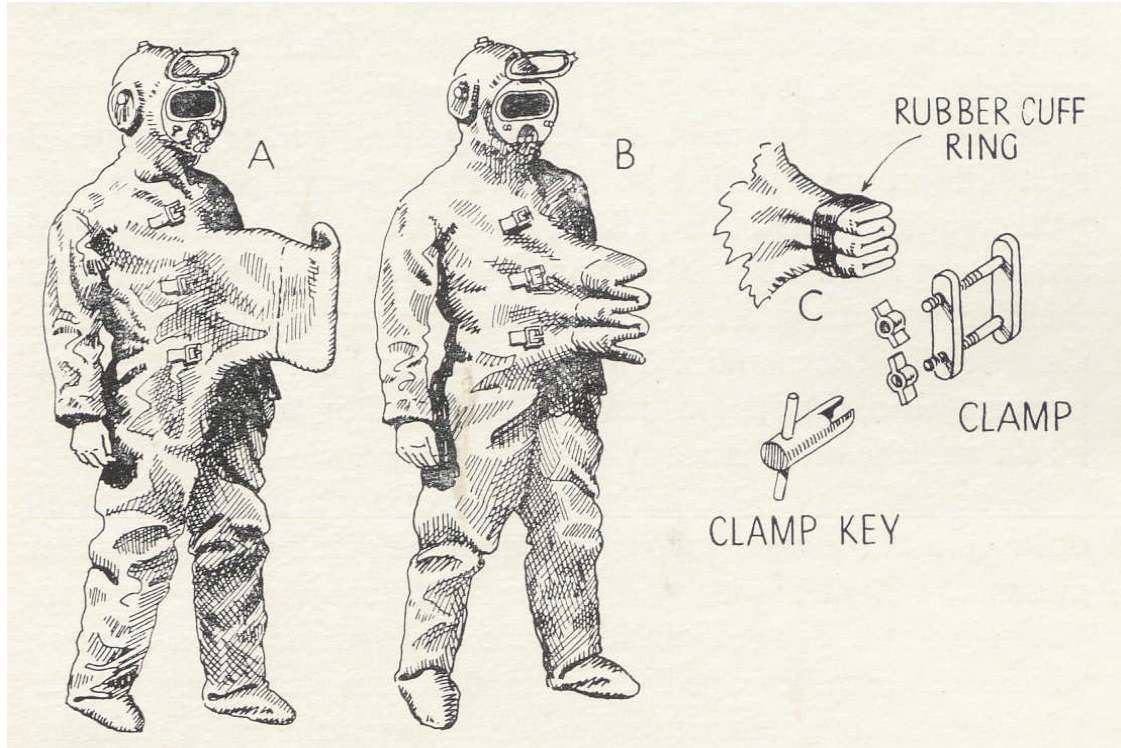
Siebe, Gorman & Co. Ltd manufactured standard diving dress until the mid-1950s, when they diversified into suits for commercial and recreational underwater swimmers. The company also made self-contained underwater breathing apparatus under licence.

Siebe-Gorman bought C. E. Heinke & Co. Ltd in 1961 and moved in 1975 from Chessington in Surrey to Cwmbran in Gwent, later specialising in breathing equipment for firefighters.

Collins and Chambers Ltd of Mare Street, London E8, distributed Siebe-Gorman products in the 1960s.

# Historical Diving Suits

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Above and left are illustrations of Siebe-Gorman's one-piece front-entry "Sladen" suit, developed by the British Admiralty for manned torpedoes. It was entered first from the front, legs first, followed by the arms and shoulders. The rubber helmet was then lifted from the back and placed over the head. The tubular trunk entry was then hanging from the chest. It was held up by the top edge, so that it hung vertically. The rubber was folded back four or five inches, and then folded vertically, concertina fashion, each lap being approximately 2½ ins. A diver's plain cuff ring was then stretched over the folds, and it was then placed in the clamp and tightened evenly by hand. A final tightening with the special key spanner supplied, completed the operation. The clamp and spare trunk were tucked inside the suit with the clamp down by the diver's left or right groin. The suit was then strapped across the front (Hampton, 1955).

### References

1. Collins and Chambers Ltd (n.d.) *Aqualung equipment & allied products*, London: Collins and Chambers.
2. Hampton (1955) *The Master Diver and Underwater Sportsman*, Southampton: Adlard Coles Limited in association with George Harrap & Co and John de Graff Inc.
3. Ley Kenyon (1957) *Collins Pocket Guide to the Undersea World* London: Collins
4. Peter Small (1957) *Your Guide to Underwater Adventure*, London: Lutterworth Press.



In the later 1950s Siebe-Gorman manufactured the Essjee two-piece swim suit based on the original frogman suit developed for the Royal Navy during World War II. It consisted of a jacket equipped with a light rubber hood and lightweight wrist cuffs, and trousers footed with moulded rubber soles. By rolling together rubber skirts attached to the jacket and trousers, the two parts were sealed and held in place by a separate rubber cummerbund. Soft sponge-rubber pads inside the hood equalised pressure on the eardrums (Kenyon, 1956). Plenty of woollen underclothes could be accommodated underneath. The suit was then available in proofed gabardine at £23 8s and rubberised stockinette at £30 5s (Small, 1957).

The material was on the outside and the rubber inside, protecting the latter from the sunlight. The diver dressed first in woollens and long socks, then put on the footed trousers. The jacket was entered arms first, while an attendant stretched the light rubber cuffs wide open. With arms in and wrists through the cuffs, the suit was then pulled gently over the head. The face aperture of the hood was drawn over the head and down round the neck. The jacket was then pulled down all round until the top skirt covered the skirt on the trousers. The two skirts were then rolled tightly together. A rubber cummerbund was then pulled up the legs and stretched over the roll (Hampton, 1955).



**Siebe Gorman rubberised stockinette dry suit equipped with valve and full face mask**



## Dry underwater swimsuits

The suits are designed to give the underwater swimmer complete protection and insulation when diving in cold or polluted waters, and prevent all contact with ambient water.

They are manufactured in two alternative materials—stockinet proofed with black rubber, or heavy duty proofed fawn twill. The suits are tough, flexible, resistant to abrasion, and impervious to oil, sunlight, and ozone. The soles of the feet are toughened to provide a hard surface for walking. The heavy duty suit is recommended for professional purposes, while the black rubber version is more suitable for sports diving and free swimming surveys.

The suit consists of a separate jacket and trousers made watertight at the waist by a roll seal held in place by a rubber cummerbund. It can be worn next to the skin or, in cold waters, over a suit of woollens. The jacket can be fitted with a hood and/or neck seal.

### Ordering details

**Ref No 040759.00**

Dry suit with braces, hood and neck seal.

**Ref No 040760.00**

Dry suit with braces and neck seal only.

**Ref No 040761.00**

Heavy duty two-piece swimsuit with braces, hood and neck seal. Manufactured in fawn 'Salvus' twill.

**Ref No 040762.00**

Heavy duty two-piece swimsuit with braces and neck seal only.



Sizes	Small	Medium
Height	5 ft 3 in–5 ft 9 in 160 cm–175 cm	5 ft 7 in–6 ft 1 in 170 cm–185 cm
Chest	32 in–36 in 81 cm–91½ cm	36 in–42 in 91½ cm–106½ cm
Inside leg	29 in–31 in 73½ cm–78½ cm	32 in–34 in 81 cm–86½ cm
Sizes	Large short	Large
Height	5 ft 7 in–6 ft 1 in 170 cm–185 cm	5 ft 9 in–6 ft 3 in 175 cm–190½ cm
Chest	42 in–46 in 106½ cm–117 cm	42 in–46 in 106½ cm–117 cm
Inside leg	32 in–34 in 81 cm–86½ cm	35 in–37 in 89 cm–94 cm

### Siebe-Gorman Two-piece Dry Underwater Swimsuits

In the 1960s Siebe-Gorman manufactured two-piece waist-entry dry suits in two versions. The first, made from stockinette proofed with black rubber, was designed for recreational purposes. The second, intended for professional use, was made from heavy-duty proofed fawn twill. Both came in four sizes with cummerbund, braces, footed trousers and a choice of hooded and hoodless jackets.

Collins and Chambers retailed the black rubber version. Prices varied between £43 16s 6d and £61 5s 0d, depending on the options selected. The firm also sold suit spares, namely jacket and trouser waist seals, cummerbunds, hoods, neck seals, cuffs and suit repairing materials.



## Woollen underclothing and gloves

Best quality pure unbleached woollen underclothing for wear under all forms of dry swimsuits.

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**Ref No 050032.00**

Jersey.

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**Ref No 050033.00**

Long pants.

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**Ref No 050034.00**

Inside stockings.

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**Ref No 050035.00**

Outside stockings.

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**Ref No 050057.00**

Scarf.

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**Ref No 050058.00**

Cap.

### Gloves

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**Ref No 061135.00**

Waterproof rubber gloves.

## Footwear



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**Ref No 050788.00**

Close fitting ankle booties with reinforced soles (Sizes 6–12), for protecting the feet from chafe when using swimfins, or for walking over rough ground ashore when wearing wet suits.

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**Ref No 029268.00**

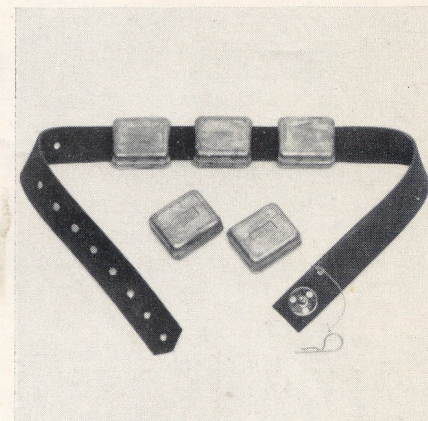
Weighted rubber lace-up shallow water boots for wear with dry or wet suits instead of swimfins.

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**Ref No 004073.00**

Spare lead soles for the above (Weight 5 lb, 2.3 kg).

## Weightbelts and weights



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**Ref No 031283.00**

Weightbelt of reinforced rubber with quick release pin.

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**Ref No 060902.00**

Leadweights 1 lb (0.45 kg).

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**Ref No 061248.00**

Leadweights 2 lb (0.9 kg).

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**Ref No 061286.00**

Leadweights 4 lb (1.8 kg).

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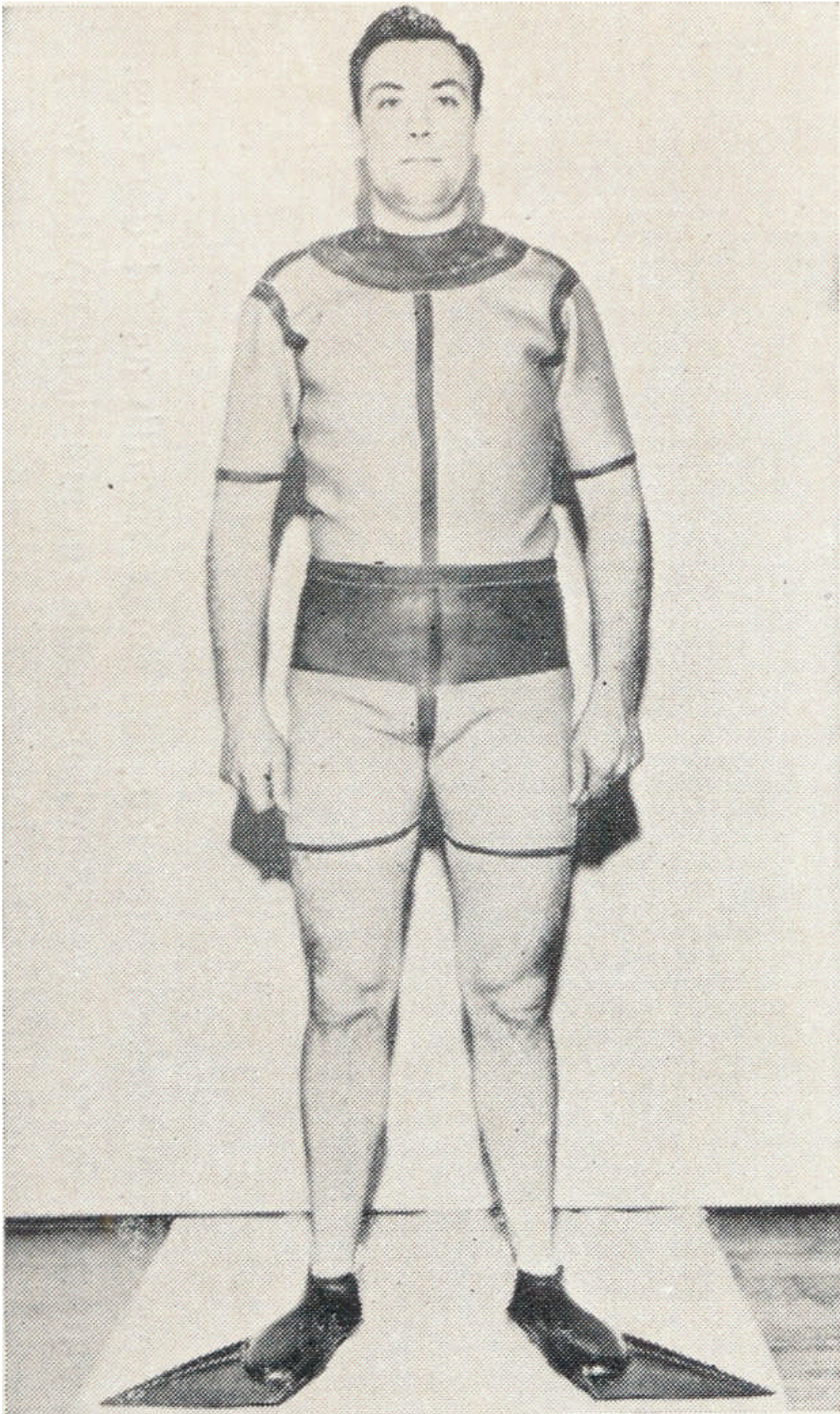
**Ref No 050116.00**

Quick release pins.

### Siebe-Gorman underwater swimsuit accessories

Siebe-Gorman also supplied a range of woollen underclothing to be worn under dry suits. The firm also produced ankle booties to protect the feet when wearing swim fins or walking over rough ground. Weighted rubber shallow water boots were also available for use with wet or dry suits when fins were not worn.





**Siebe-Gorman Sponge Rubber Swimsuit**

Siebe-Gorman also manufactured wet suits. An early example is the Essjee Sponge Rubber Swimsuit illustrated above. The same suit could be supplied with long arms and legs and a sponge-rubber cap, designed to protect the back of the neck as well as the head (Hampton, 1955). The suit was available in three sizes: Small, Medium and Large (Kenyon, 1956). In the mid-1950s, the short version retailed from £6 2s 3d to £7 5s 6d depending on size. The long version, sealing at the wrists and ankles, cost between £10 13s 3d and £11 14s 6d. The sponger rubber cap cost £2 14s (Small, 1957).



## Foam neoprene wet suits

'Wet' suit is the term used to describe the popular foam neoprene underwater suit. These suits, carefully tailored to give a close fit to the body, protect the wearer by holding a static layer of water close to the skin which quickly absorbs and retains the heat of the body, thus forming an insulating layer of warmed water. In addition, the air trapped in the myriad cells of the foam neoprene provides another layer of protection.

The suits are tough, warm and resilient and the micro-cellular neoprene allows 300 per cent stretch giving underwater swimmers complete freedom of movement. All seams are stitched and glued and suits are available in either plain neoprene foam or backed with elastic nylon which greatly prolongs the life of the suit without impeding the stretch.

To assist in dressing, the jackets can be supplied either with a Velcro nylon tape press fastener or with a non-corrosive nylon zip fastener.

'Wet' suits obviate uncomfortable nip experienced with dry suits in deep water.

### Ordering details

#### Ref No 040763.00

Foam neoprene wet suit comprising jacket, trousers and separate hood and bootees in  $\frac{3}{16}$  in unlined double skin neoprene fitted with Velcro jacket fastener.

#### Ref No 040888.00

As above with zip jacket fastener.

#### Ref No 040764.00

As above with 4 mm nylon-lined neoprene with plain pull-over jacket.

#### Ref No 040765.00

As above nylon-lined with Velcro jacket fastener.

#### Ref No 040889.00

As above nylon-lined with zip jacket fastener.



	Men's chest measurement	Ladies' bust measurement
Size		
Extra small	31 in–33 in 75 cm–84 cm	32 in–34 in 81 cm–86 cm
Small	33 in–35 in 84 cm–89 cm	34 in–36 in 86 cm–91 cm
Small medium	35 in–37 in 89 cm–94 cm	
Medium	37 in–39 in 94 cm–99 cm	36 in–38 in 91 cm–96.5 cm
Large medium	39 in–42 in 99 cm–107 cm	
Large	42 in–45 in 107 cm–114 cm	38 in–40 in 96.5 cm–102 cm
Extra large	45 in–47 in 114 cm–119 cm	40 in–42 in 102 cm–107 cm

### Siebe-Gorman Foam Neoprene Wet Suits

In the 1960s Siebe-Gorman manufactured wet suits in a choice of unlined and nylon-lined foam neoprene. As well as plain pullover styles, jackets could be supplied with zip or velcro fasteners.