

Heinke Delta Suit

C. E. Heinke & Co. Ltd of London was an old-established manufacturer of standard diving apparatus. In 1961, Siebe Gorman took the company over and “for a short while, equipment was given ‘Siebe-Heinke’ tags but eventually the name completely disappeared” (Diving Heritage, 2000).

By the mid-1950s, Heinke had diversified into recreational underwater swimming equipment, including Hans Hass masks and fins. In the product range were two “underwater suits”, both made from rubber on a stockinet base: the Delta dry suit and the Dolphin wet suit.

Delta Suit Facts

This “two-piece skin suit made of high-gloss-surfaced natural rubber proofed on to a stockinet cloth” (Kenyon, 1957, p. 26) could be worn “over a set of thin and close-fitting woollies” (Small, 1957, p. 62).

Historical Diving Suits

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HEINKE
UNDERWATER SUITS
DELTA SUIT

The Delta Suit gives perfect freedom of movement and when worn over woollen underwear offers complete protection against cold.

It can be used with fins and mask either with or without an aqualung, and is therefore an ideal garment for out-of-season swimming.

The standard Delta Suit has hood and built-in feet, but neck or ankle seals can be fitted if required.

The Heinke Delta Suit is made from a black rubber mix spread on to a stockinette base. The skirts are seamless and the bootees have moulded non slip soles. Dressing can be carried out single handed and if care is taken when making the rolled joint and when ‘venting’ the suit the wearer should remain perfectly dry. A small towel around the neck will absorb seepage of water entering round the neck seal. After use the suit should be thoroughly dried inside and out. For prolonged storage, dust with French Chalk, fold loosely and store away from heat and light.

YOUR PERSONAL MEASUREMENTS

	SMALL	MEDIUM	LARGE
Height	5' 3"-5' 9"	5' 7"-6' 1"	5' 9"-6' 3"
Chest	32"-36"	36"-42"	42"-46"
Waist	27"-31"	30"-35"	36"-42"
Leg (Crutch to floor)—Long or short legs can be supplied to special order at no extra charge.	29"-31"	32"-34"	35"-37"

The size chosen allows plenty of room for woollen underwear.

Delta Suit

Heinke Underwater Suits (Heinke, n.d.)

- The suit was designed to “keep the diver dry” (Hampton, 1955, p. 112) and to give “freedom of movement” (Heinke, n.d.).
- Although the suit fitted closely to the skin, thin woollen underwear could be worn underneath to provide protection against cold.
- The suit could be used for prolonged dives in and out of season with fins and mask, with or without underwater breathing apparatus.
- A jacket with neck seal and trousers with ankle seals made up the basic suit. The waist seal was held in place by a cummerbund. The full suit came with built-in hood and feet.
- The suit was made in up to three sizes: **Small, Medium and Large**. Long or short legs could be supplied to “special order at no extra charge” (Heinke, n.d.).
- The suit could be donned unassisted. As with “a jersey” (Kenyon, 1957, p. 26), the arms were first inserted into the jacket, which was then pulled over the head.
- If care was taken when making the waist-seal rolled joint and when venting the suit of trapped air at the neck seal, the suit would remain dry. A small towel could be worn round the neck to prevent water seepage.
- After use, the suit had to be dried inside and out and stored away from light and heat, folded loosely and dusted with French chalk.
- The neck and ankle seal model cost £16 6s (Small, 1957, p. 62), while the version “with all accessories ... a built-in hood, watertight gloves and bootees” (Kenyon, 1957, p. 26) was priced “about £20.”

References

1. Diving Heritage (2000) <http://www.divingheritage.com/>
2. T. A. Hampton (1955) *The Master Diver and Underwater Sportsman*, Southampton: Adlard Coles Limited in association with George Harrap & Co and John de Graff Inc.
3. C. E. Heinke & Co. (n.d.) *Heinke Underwater Suits*
4. Ley Kenyon (1957) *Collins Pocket Guide to the Undersea World* London: Collins
5. Peter Small (1957) *Your Guide to Underwater Adventure*, London: Lutterworth Press.