

September 2006 - Lyme Regis Diving weekend

“It is really hard to wee when you are clothed.”

“I can’t go you will all have to turn round.”

“I can’t find my glasses without my glasses”

“Why are there always naked women around when I haven’t got my glasses, hang on I’ll be there soon.”

My thanks to Coen for his pictures.

Thursday 14 Sept

I arrived about 6pm Thursday expecting to be second on site. Tony I knew would be down early but unexpectedly Mark had also taken advantage of the bad weather. It transpired they had made good use of the time. Mark had his first dive of the weekend into the sump of the boat to clear the crap out. Also pine forest had descended upon the said boat and left its needles which despite hours of work by Mark and Tony proved resilient to being removed in full. The damaged dead mans switch received the Tony “Heath Robinson” Curtis touch. They had then taken the boat out for trials. And all this while I enjoyed my drive through the countryside. We had a quiet night and can you blame them?

Friday 15 Sept

8:30 away was the target on Friday Morning. 11 assembled for Mark’s 6 man rib, Tony C, Tony F, Ross, Mark H, Mark S, Gareth, Sam, Paul, Marcus, Emma and I. Also, Ryan who was set to dive that afternoon as part of his qualification. Mark organised relays. First hit was the Baygitano being close in land to enable a quick turn round. I dived with Tony F and this proved an ideal start to the weekend. Fish life was so prolific that even with 10m plus vis my buddy all but disappeared behind a wall of fish which refused to flee as we swam through the huge herd. Bass and Pollock were in abundance, but with my fish recognition they could have been anything. A good dive and back to the Rib. Unfortunately my regulator was leaking air a little, fortunately I had taken a pony with me and swapped the second stage leaving the pony behind for the rest of the weekend.



The next shift left while Ryan entertained us with an unceasing commentary on the world in general, quietened at times as Ross and Mark occupied him with deep frozen milk products. Gareth also entertained us with tales of deep sea technical dive and explained that his pee valve was hard to use when fully clothed. But an essential tool for long decompression dives. We thought it was too far down his leg!

Mark returned and after grabbing a very short break we set off for the next leg. Tesco’s reef this time. Ross joined Tony and I for a pleasant drift as Mark H was not diving again. Tesco’s is always a good afternoon dive nice and easy and relaxing. Dog

fish and various others provided the scenery and entertainment. Families of crabs seemed to line the cracks in the reef wall. Up went the DSMB and we returned to the surface. My thanks to Coen for the photo, poetic licence to show it here as they're it's too slim to be me.



After the second shift Mark H took the boat out for a 5th time that day with Ryan to complete another qualifying dive.

Once back at the camp site Mark H and I set off to Johns to sort out air for Saturday. Somehow John's place was exactly what you might expect. An amazing and brilliant place. The sort that dreams are made of, yet steel and iron. Tony joined us there with more tanks.

Phil was waiting at my van when we got back and chauffeured 4 of us to the Royal Standard for a bite to eat and a few beers. It was getting late when we got back and as we had not put up awnings due to the threatening rain we retired.

Saturday



8:30 on Miss Pattie was the order of the day. Phil is not great on Morning and felt my nose clip a waste during the night. When at 8 pm Mark called time we were ready(ish) and aboard his van and ready for off. At 9:15 we were on the boat but still waiting for some. Even so we got off in enough time just catching the slack tide. The Sidion was awesome. I was so glad to have done the Nitrox course the previous week. As an inexperienced diver it maximised my bottom time in line with my air consumption. We had a wonderful 40 minute dive on the sunken sub standing upright in 30-36 meters of water largely intact. Descending the shot the conning tower loomed in front of us an tremendous spectacle sending a stunning message about what we were about to see. The level of intactness gave a wonder concept of the sunken submarine. However, our job was to move previous boat's shot, which took some effort, fortunately mainly my buddy's. Then we then set off to explore, initially the dive was crowded but the divers from the previous boat soon left and we seemed to have the site to ourselves, only once spotting fellow divers. There were great holes and gaps to look into and see the vessel and aquatic life and some of those holes tempted you in. As my no decompression limit hit 1 minute we ascended to the top of the tower and I sent up my DSMB which seems easier each time. As always John was there at the top of the ladder to ensure we get back on safely and to remove our fins.



On board Miss Pattie great fuss was made as one of the team decided he just had to take a leak, and with no loo on Miss Pattie that meant over the back of the boat. Unfortunately, the chaos this created meant he felt unable to relieve himself and gave up with a cry of “I can’t go you will all have to turn round.” Just over two hours of socialising and a take away service performed by our accompanying rib brought us to the next dive. Golden Cap drift. This was a gentle slow drift at some 18-20 meters and we had a pleasant 46 minutes. The first 5 of which were the most exciting. As we descended the shot a bright purple/blue lobster poked itself out of its hole to greet us. Popping in and out like some animatronics device from “it’s a small world” in Disney land. After such excitement I seemed to have fun getting my buoyancy right but a great find. Once on the Cobb, we loaded John’s car with tanks, I swear it was going to touch the ground when he left. After that it was back to base but there was little time to stop as a night dive of the Baggie was planned. We took the Rib to the coast and Phil and Mark launch her while Dave and I headed back to John’s for the tanks.



Back at Lyme it was a bite to eat and some refreshment and off to the ribs for 8pm. The Mark’s rib struggled to get up speed but he coached her out, with Dave’s rib in support. Mark had craftily pre-shot the baggy which in that light seemed just as well to me, but he had to own up to it as he had been spotted when he did it. Ross, Claire and Coen were with us as well and others between the two ribs. Coen was not diving and held a small torch for our rib. So while kitting up in the dark was novel it was not as hard as I feared. Phil and I were second in, and at 21:04 we descended the shot through the florescent creatures in the water into the darkness beneath. The Baggie made an awesome night dive with her beams looming out of nowhere and her boiler appearing suddenly under torch light from behind me. The crabs were everywhere with “come and get me if you are hard enough” expressions. What was easy to see in daylight became an eerie science fiction landscape illuminated by torches, and columns of light shining in the distance from other divers. I missed a huge conga despite Tony and Sam’s efforts to get my attention. Certainly, a dive I would repeat at the drop of a hat. Like others, we did not find the shot line, but were very near the boat when we came up after 41 minutes.

Back on the rib, Mark was busy repairing the engine. He nursed her back into harbour, but that was it for this rib this weekend. Making both of Mark’s ribs out of action, it was not proving to be his year.

Our one female diver had decided to wear a semidry suit and so now choose to change on Lyme Cobb to the occasional comment of “I can’t find my glasses without my glasses” and “why are there always naked women around when I haven’t got my glasses, hang on I’ll be there soon.” After which we set course for the pub arriving ½ an hour before closing time.

Sunday 17 Sept

Saturday had been a long day and I had spent most of it as a passenger, so I can only guess on how tired some of the other felt when we got back the previous night. When the alarm went off at 7am I did not want to wake up but John wanted to get the most of the slack time and so be away by 9am, which meant leaving the camp site no later than 8am. Phil however provided such joy unintentionally playing a “grumpy old man” that I hardly stopped laughing.

The morning took us to Gibel Hamam a small British steamship torpedoed in 1918, 7½ miles out of Lyme. Phil and I were first in and it was a bit murky as we got to the bottom of the line. Turning left to the stern the visibility improved significantly. She had been torpedoed mid-ship and this created a fascinating hole to explore. As we



swam round we dropped down round towards the base to about 33 meters and swam round, slowly working our way up. Though largely intact there were still holes and gaps to view the vessel and aquatic life throughout. Occasionally you could see the torch light from divers on the other side. A pair of divers had ventured inside and reported spotting us later. Another cracking 40 minute dive. Looking at Coen’s photos I had never realise how big the boat looked from sea level.

In the afternoon we dropped at 2:15 onto West Bay High ground for a gentle relaxing slow drift. Lobster, wrasse and numerous other fish. Mark and Ryan whizzed past us soon after we were in, but otherwise we saw no one else in our 66 minutes. It was just so calm and peaceful. Fish playing and swimming, A lobster poked his head out at one point just to see what we were up to. Very relaxing and chill’ in dive. Another brilliant days diving.



A storm was brewing and so the final day’s diving was aborted. Not much you can do about the weather. It was back to the camp site, pack away, say farewells and head home. An extra day would have been great, but nothing could dampen another terrific weekend. My appreciative thanks to Mark and the others for yet another great time, in and out of the water.