



**Devon  
April 1997**

[Trip Report Index](#)

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Despite being straddled in the preceding and following weeks by balmy sunshine, this trip was made in less than optimum conditions. Given the exceptional weather we had for the Weymouth trip last month, it was fairly predictable that this trip would bear the burden of bringing the average back down, and so it was..

Each with a full and greasy breakfast to act as ballast, we set out from Whitechapel harbour for the J E Layne on Saturday morning in conditions that would have sent the Man from Atlantis running for the hand-rail with both fins over his mouth. By the time we arrived at the dive site, although the conditions had eased, the battle for the contents of our stomachs was level pegging at CUUEG 3 - Plymouth Sound 3, and through some ill-timed repair needlework on a wrist-strap I had sewn on of my torches quite securely to my forearm.

As ever though, the scene underwater was a different story. Descending to 21m in visibility approaching 8m, the J E Layne's bows appeared quite clearly from the depths in complete calm. The flatness of the bed here meant the surge was almost unnoticeable, and the visibility gave an impressive perspective of the size of this ship. I was surprised that only 1 other dive boat was on this wreck, given the recent Diver article. I can only put this down to the ardour of the journey, which I felt was worth it, although Candy would disagree I'm sure.

Subsequent dives were nothing too adventurous, taking into account the conditions: A scenic paddle behind the breakwater, a circuit of the rock pinnacle at Hillsea point, and a rather exciting tumble in the surge at Steve's reef. Despite this, there was plenty to see in the way of sea life apart from the usual arm-wrestling with spider crabs. Several divers spotted dogfish snoozing amongst the sea-slugs, and Candy had a brief encounter with a cuttlefish.

In all, I think the weekend was a triumph of determination over weather, with some quite reasonable diving. John Dance proved to be a competent and hospitable skipper, and I would anticipate more trips with him this year, interest permitting.