



**Devon
April 1998**

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Trip Report by Sam Cockerill

Divers:

- Sam Cockerill
- Eddie Foo
- Jo Bond
- Rob Critchley
- Guy Hewitt
- Philip Rae
- Chris Goddard
- Tom Riley

In some countries it can be very easy for a diver to become disenchanted with the dull monotony of diving in the same crystal clear waters with the same abundance of sea-life, dive-in, dive-out. I was particularly concerned that following the tedium of our week in Malta, Tom and Phil may entirely lose their appetite for a sport which should be primarily about the excitement of entering the unknown. It was therefore an immense relief to hear Friday's shipping forecast, which promised an entire weekend of non-stop variety.

Saturday - Dive 1 - James Egan Layne

Beating our way across to this site is always a bit of a rollercoaster, but this one seemed livelier than ever. Our customary "Poorliest person on the boat" contest got off to a roaring start with a number of close contenders, but Saturday's trophy will probably have to go to Chris, rocking back and forth in a tight foetal position, his face a picture of utter despair.

When Tom lost his mask rolling in, I was beginning to wonder whether we'd had enough variety for one day; but this was how we discovered that we had in our presence a powerful ally. It became apparent during our last Plymouth trip that Eddie's relationship with dive equipment bordered on the mystical. Ruptured hoses, self-separating emergency cylinders and dead dive computers couldn't accumulate so frequently about one person by chance alone. However, in the intervening months he had somehow harnessed this inexplicable force, and become the phenomenon we know today as "Eddie Foo, Kit Jedi".

And so it was that Tom's mask fell neatly into the palm of Eddie's hand at 20m.

Meanwhile Guy had set himself up as founder and president of the Marine Consumption Society, and picked a lobster the size of a small dog off the bow section for his inaugural banquet. With claws fit for arm-wrestling a JCB, this majestic creature was not to be crossed lightly. Were it not for the respectful distance demanded by its sheer size, our "Free Lobby" campaign may have even erupted in some direct action to cast him back off the boat; However, Guy was adamant. The silver lining to this turn of events came later that evening when it turned out that there wasn't a pot in the entire village big enough to cook Lobby whole, and Guy was forced to sell him in the Pub and buy a load of beer on the proceeds.

Saturday - Dive 2 - Tinker's Shoal

Although the sea-state was pretty much the same as this morning, the surge here was much calmer. Tom and I landed almost directly on top of a dog-fish dozing in the kelp, which rather foolishly allowed itself to become captured.

On balance I think we probably did the creature a favour; with Guy and Eddie hot on our fins, a healthy fear of humans may have been the difference between a long life of sauntering around the sandy reefs humming the "Jaws" theme, and being bartered in the 'Dog and Pastie' for a bag of cheese and onion flavoured nik-naks.

It came as no surprise when Guy pulled himself (empty handed) onto the boat and his £100 torch ripped from his stab and flew back into the sea, Eddie's supernatural powers were brought to bear once again. Bizarre.

Sunday - Dive 1 - Penlee Point

With a worsening sea-state, our options were somewhat limited, so we opted for a shallow dive on this east-facing shore. The visibility was down to around 1-2m, but in many ways this improved matters. Being able to see off into the hazy blue distance can be such a distraction on

a dive, and I find it focuses the mind wonderfully to have one item at a time presented to one's field of view and then removed, like a well practised lecturer revealing bulletpoints on his overheads;

So what might one expect to see on this type of dive? Any ideas? Well, there's:-

- kelp
- a rock
- a power cable
- a big anchor chain
- a bag of cement ...

Sunday - Dive 2 - Scallop hunt!

Having considered the various divergent interests of the divers on board, it became clear that there was only which could reasonably be catered for. In the absence of good viz, calm sea, warm water or a deep virgin wreck, only one motive to go diving remained.

At John's secret destination near the breakwater we descended onto the substantial remnants of on was once a colossal scallop bed.

Tom and I spent most of the dive climbing along a cable into a strong current which was doing its best to get the better of my SMB. When the cable itself began to give way I had a brief image of us unplugging Fort Bovisand, and we quickly changed cables.

Meanwhile, within half an hour of entering, the MCS president had a goodie bag filled to the brim with an assortment of scallops and a strange snail-type thing, which he brandished high out of the water with a maniacal grin and a chilling bellow of "Foood!"