



**St. Abbs
June 1998**

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Trip Report by Sam Cockerill

Divers:

- Sam Cockerill
- Naomi Dobraszczyc
- Kathy Gubbins
- James Harper
- Peter Huxley
- Tom Riley

Wave 1: 5-8th

As I sat at my desk on Friday morning, thumbing idly through the latest issue of widgets weekly, and pondering our imminent departure, a funny thought hit me: what if we drive all the way up there and its completely crap?

"Of course its crap, its been crap for weeks. There's not a chance of any shore diving up here in the next month, unless your planned exit is through the floor of a Wessex. And don't go paraphrasing me, neither." The Scoutscroft dive centre was hiding something, I could tell.

Eyemouth dive centre was more helpful, although the message was largely the same. The only glimmer of hope was delivered in the form of a cheap offer of spaces on Guiding Star, skippered by Peter Gibson.

Peter had no such reservations as we chugged out of the harbour, indifferent to the shattered waves falling on us over the breakwater. Our first dive was around a rock on the way to Petticowick which we decided must be called Float Carr. Starting in the sheltered water behind the rock, we descend through a broad channel to the north face in a surprising 10m visibility. Float Carr is split by a narrow arch passing all the way through, vaguely reminiscent of the inland sea dive in Malta. Here we are harassed by two large wrasse begging convincingly for urchin giblets, a pavlovian response to seeing divers in these parts. To the relief of the urchins we do not oblige.

Our second is in the shelter of Petticowick bay itself. Peter puts us near the boiler of the Odense, a peanut ship sunk in 1917. Kathy and James are visited by a flock (shoal?) of guillemots, their curiosity aroused by their bubbles, who swim down to investigate.

By Sunday the weather had backed off to the point that St Abbs harbour was becoming diveable, but we made an early start to get one more boat dive in off St Abbs head lighthouse. We fin north through a sandy bottomed gully densely padded with dead men's fingers and anemones, squat lobsters and shrimp nestling under every rock. As we emerge onto a broad plateau of smooth boulders, the visibility verges on awesome.

Our first shot at Cathedral Rock came that afternoon, although on tables we were only allowed 24 minutes in the attempt. This got us approximately half way and back, but at least jogged my memory of the route for tomorrow. Whether this was the memory of when I found it or when I spent an hour finning in circles in the kelp looking for it, I couldn't be entirely sure. The first part of the dive involves swimming through a tight matrix of gulleys lined with tall kelp stalks giving the impression of a woodland path, opening out into a sandy clearing at 14m. We pause here for a while, basking in the sun.

The early start required for our boat dive had left us with the best part of the afternoon to play with, and we opted for a third dive around Broad Craig. Realising that this was in fact the dive on which I remembered finning in circles in kelp boosted my navigational confidence for tomorrows pilgrimage considerably.

Reinforced by the arrival of the second wave of divers from Cambridge, we returned to the harbour on Monday morning. Although the visibility had stirred to a disappointing 8m or so, we made good progress out through the woods, past the clearing and into the boulder-field. Peter H and Tom R were joining us for this dive so they would have a chance of finding it alone later in the week. Despite meandering a little during our passage, we managed to find our way to arch, if a little breathlessly.

Tom was being "new kit diver" which made finding our way back a doddle, simply following the furrow carved along the bed as he got to grips with the finer details of buoyancy control in his shiny new drysuit and stab.

Our final dive was out to the quite inappropriately named (not to mention mis-spelt) Big Green Carr, where Peter and Alex were the only ones to find the resident Wolf fish. There remains some debate as to the size of this magnificent creature, but both agreed that his menacing

stage-sowl and tight leotard made him a formidable and worthy adversary.