



**Bovisand  
March 1999**

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## The CD (seedy?) Trainees

- Dan "Fin and Snorkel" Hamm
- Emma "Random Question" Harper
- Ida "Wetsuit" Lister
- Jon "Change of plan, again... and again" Stafford
- Kieran "Sleepy" Westley
- Mary "Ear Rinse" Youngs
- Nicola "No More Boats!" Armitage
- Phil "Tom, I'm going to kill you in the morning" Read
- Shaun "oooh me back!" Denney
- Tim "Sky Walker" Norris

## N2-SD Trainees

- Jessica "Rachel" Warren
- John "Driver" Ranasinghe

## Qualified Divers

- Devin "The Man in Black" Mackenzie
- John "Safety Stop!" Rubinstein
- Phil "Tied up at the moment" Rae
- Tom "Safety Stop?" Riley



Kieran, Nicola, Dan, John  
Jessica, Ida, Emma, Mary, Tim, Tom, Shaun

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## Day One: Friday 12th March 1999

Friday began with a frantic running around, in the sunshine, finishing off my packing and going over to Kathy's to try and get the O2 kit. She wasn't in, went round to Iain's. He wasn't in, left a message.

Finally gave up finished my packing and made my way down to the Panton Arms. The plan was for Shaun to arrive with the minibus at 1:00 but well I thought I'd be keen! A few people were even keener!





After a few minutes I went over to the kitstore to see if anyone was waiting there, Which is when we met Shaun, without the minibus. It turned out that even though he was paying by credit card, Kennings weren't prepared to accept Passport, student photo ID etc. etc. as proof of identity! He would be forced to return home and get an. Eastern Electricity Bill. (People trying to get past 3<sup>rd</sup> world border guards with kalashnikovs and big moustaches should remember this!) John and Shaun went off to try and sort it out. The rest of us waited, in the rain. Eventually we bought a few drinks etc. and sat down. Emma said she'd seen Kathy on the Fen Causeway so I went off to try and get her keys to get the O2 kit. After running a few miles I finally found her and got her keys! Back at the Panton arms- The minibus still hadn't arrived. Drank coke, ate crisps.

Jessica went of to get some tapes to listen to on the way down. We spent several minutes saying "That sounds like a van. Oh no it isn't." (John's car does sound remarkably like a diesel transit!)

Eventually a Kennings Van arrived and we dashed round to the kitstore and loaded up. We then went round to Kathy's to collect the O2 kit and Jessica. Iain was there, I hid, we picked up John and Finally left Cambridge at 2:30.

The rest of the Journey was remarkable for:-

The amount of sleeping that went on given we hadn't even hit the water yet.

Many, Many, MANY traffic jams.

Discussions about whether traffic cones were planning to take over the country, and what the odds were (more cones or people?)

Emma's:- Can I have some of your drink? I don't want a whole one and it's cheaper to drink half of yours than buy my own! Emma made various attempts to keep us amused, you'd almost think they were unintentional!

Suffice it to say that it took seven and a half hours to get to Bovisand, we made a stop at Sainsbury's, Minor scuffles about what we bought.

Finally we got there and sorted out the room keys, top fort west is much bigger than the top fort East we had last year. Met Phil Rae and John Rubinstein and yawn, Went to bed at 1:30.

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## Day Two: Saturday 13th March 1999

Woke up when Jon Stafford and Phil Reid arrived having spent ages wandering around until they discovered us (Oops, sorry guys, knew there was something I'd forgotten!) brief threats that I would die in the morning, went to sleep again.

Had to be up early to talk to George (Bovi's head instructor), do what you like, but bring them back alive.

Devin and Phil plumbed the, murky depths of Bovisand harbour swimming out towards the shipping lane, before changing their minds and

swimming back towards the nature reserve, the best part was in the shallows.

John and I went in for John's first ever cold(ish) seawater dive, We swam around in the shallows of the nature reserve, finding some vividly coloured Snakelock Anemones, sponges, coral and a few bits of weed. A couple of Ballan wrasse made a brief appearance and we gave chase, one of them stopped and we managed to get pretty close to it.

Still doing my intensive bottom search thing, aiming to show John that there really was life around, we finned off over an area of sand and I had to content myself with pointing out the entrances to worm burrows, and a few Whelks leaving trails in the sand. A dragonette decided discretion was the better part of valour and made a sharp exit as we approached.

Rising over a rocky outcrop we found some Membranipera on some kelp and had a look for the Nudibranchs that eat it (Polycera quadrilineata - that's one of the few I can identify!!), but didn't find any. John spotted an edible crab tucked in a hole, we looked at it, it looked at us, we went away. Found a Nudibranch(?) (not polycera) on another piece of kelp with two electroluminescent streaks down its back. It looked quite cool anyway.

Surfaced and wound in the SMB, John was impressed, I quote "I didn't expect there to be so much life." Mission accomplished!

Later on we went for a second dive to use up the air in our tanks, Carefully avoiding Mary and Ida (recognised the fins and semidry!), we made our way around the outside of the harbour wall and found ourselves with severely distorted vision, this gave us three options:

1. There was some oil on the inside of our masks.
2. There was something very funny was going on in our brains.
3. Something else was up.

Well in my case 2 is a normal state of affairs so having discounted 1 by clearing our masks, put it down to either of a halocline (all that rain) or thermocline in the water. The surge around the wall was making life uncomfortable, so we worked our way round back into the harbour picking our way along the bottom. Searching the holes in the harbour wall turned up a couple of edible crabs and a velvet.

John wanted to play with the velvet, I warned him against using his finger, he used a knife. Given their usual tendencies, this one was remarkably cowardly and hid at the back of the hole, perhaps having only half a claw had something to do with it!

Later Mary claimed to have found a Nudibranch which looked like a piece of paper, (in Bovi harbour?)

After that we went for a night dive...this was a perfect dive and everything went fine, then we went to bed, honest.

Okay I'll come clean, we did plan it properly, we did make sure everyone had glowsticks, and that there was a glowstick on the SMB, our excellent (if I'm nice they might keep quiet) surface cover had a nice bright torch to help us find the way back. We each had two torches. We forgot one very simple thing...WATER!

When we got into the water we discovered that we could still touch the bottom when we were floating on the surface. We were diving in two buddy pairs one pair, Devin and Phil, leading the other, John and I.. Devin and Phil submerged about 4m us and when we got down we could see two glows in the murk- we swam towards the brighter of the two and found, a group of divers learning how to night dive, Oh. We went to the fainter glow and then found Devin and Phil. At this point we saw a "great light". It was of course Devin and his portable sun (who needs a weightbelt?)

Following Devin and Phil I saw an edible crab sitting on the bottom, but quickly had to fin off quickly before I lost them in the murk.

We made our way around to the end of the breakwater and after a brief search, finally located an old steel cable (cunningly hidden under some rocks) leading away to the north, we followed it.

At this point it became apparent that I was going to have to stay very close to Phil to stay in contact it also became apparent that Phil's legs were longer than that distance! Despite his best efforts to avoid kicking me I was glad of my hood!

Apparently there was a lot to see, I must admit to missing it! There was a definite "space invaders" feel to the dive, with glowing Cylooms, flashing strobes, and torches probing the murk.

We found the rope leading off to the right from the cable and on the end of it a BIG (and I mean BIG) anchor, Somewhere around this point I saw a fish! - It was that sort of dive.

After that we swam off towards the nature reserve, the viz deteriorated even more, and a reasonable surge built up, eventually in 2.3m we gave up and surfaced. After untangling Phil from the SMB line we discovered that we were near the second blockhouse and began to swim back. John said something about a problem with his BC which put me in maximum buddy care paranoia mode!

About this time I realised that it did seem that we were rather close to the shore, shining my torch behind me I realised there was a huge great big rock there, John and I went out to sea, round it!

On the way back, without any warning (I was finning on my back) I was rudely assaulted by a (hiding honest) rock, and ruffed up a bit before crawling off it.

Eventually we made it back to the side and surface cover, who were helpfully shining a light out for us. John kindly offered to wash out my ears with his was wash-bottle (He claims it was bought and not nicked it from Addenbrooks!) and successfully got me to stand still whilst he squirted water all over my face but completely missed my ear!

We de-kited, and went to cook a meal, except the cooker wasn't working, some ordered Pizza, Devin and a few cooked in the microwave.

Both Johns, Phil and I ended up going for a dodgy Chinese takeaway and hoping we wouldn't regret it in the morning!

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### Day Three: Sunday 14th March 1999

Up early to meet the boat. And due to severely leaky drysuits, I ended up lending mine to Nicola who went out on the boat on a flat calm sea, and got seasick!!



We wondered if the leaky suits could have something to do with the lack of gaskets on the inflator valves? Eventually they decided it could, but then didn't have any so settled for tightening them up, which left only a small dribbles.

Nicola returned to two (carefully prioritised) questions,

"Is my suit alright?"

"Are you alright?"

Then to reassure her we had her strip out of the suit on the quay side, I jumped into the suit and, whilst the CD trainees had lunch, we dashed out of the harbour for a dive. At this point Glen said "Start kiting up when we reach the breakwater." Ten seconds later we were going past it.

Struggling into our kit we were told that the wreck was La Poulmic, the wreck of a french minesweeper, which hit a mine (what else).

We were just about ready when we got to the shot line and given a dive brief along the lines of swim into the tide, or "towards Cambridge." or "East, South East"

Devin and Phil rolled in followed by John and I. We dropped down the Shotline and set off in search of the wreck, unfortunately I had misheard "East, [no] South East" as "East South East" and set off on a bearing of 110, John gave up heading SE and followed. Eventually we came across the bottom of a hull on the seabed and a rudder, which we had a good look at.

A friendly Ballan Wrasse came over to have a look at us and refused to go away following us for the rest of the dive, we called him (or her) "Fred" and "it" didn't seem to be offended.

A slight current flowing over the wreck helped to keep some idea of direction and we searched along the wreck until it petered out and we were left with a rocky bottom.

A large Edible Sea Urchin (who says there's no life in cold water - warm water divers never get to see these!). The size of this lead to John getting very excited, and I remembered feeling the same the first time I'd seen one, however rising over the next outcrop revealed another five!

Attempts to get it to walk on Johns hand didn't work so we put it back and left it to munch it's algae in peace.

Further exploration revealed a couple of Dogfish, with unusually high self preservation instincts, both making rapid escapes...perhaps they remembered us from last year! A lemon sole which was quietly hiding under a ledge, until John poked it with a starfish!

A couple of Sea Cucumbers were inoffensively lying on the bottom, This was later taken by certain trainees as a good incentive get buoyancy control sorted rather than risk getting covered with guts.

John went to give them a poke (why???) but stopped when I protested. Apparently you can start dissecting them before they shoot their respiratory tract at you, but he stopped in case the British ones were a bit easier to provoke!

Devonshire cup coral and the ubiquitous Snakelock anemones and some dead-mans fingers provided some distractions before we launched our borrowed DSMB and made our way to the surface, using a truly horrible reel! Making a brief safety stop at 5m, to keep Johns hi-tech

tables happy, brief that is because I didn't realise what he was doing whilst I was fighting a losing battle with the reel!

We then relaxed on the surface whilst we waited for the boat to pick us up, and then returned to Bovisand, after what is probably the fastest hardboat dive in history, feeling quite pleased!

Not feeling like a repeat of the previous night we decided not to do a night dive and after completing my education on exactly how Sainsbury's pasta should be cooked, we went to bed "early".

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## Day four:- Monday 15th March 1999

Promises of being provided with a RIB to accompany the Maid Maggie and the trainees for the day, came to nothing so we were left with the choice of either:-

Wait till 3:30 for the Maid Maggie to come back and go out for dive after that, or pay an extra £10 and go out on a private RIB from lunch time.

Waiting on the side kitted up in our drysuits we watched the tide come in, 12 o'clock came and went, we discovered that Devin's fins and mask had been loaded onto the Maid Maggie, no problem we can chase them in the RIB. We began to feel rather warm in our drysuits. My zip was finally opened up and then severely waxed as it was rather stiff!

At about 14:00 the RIB we'd been expecting turned up, but it hadn't got the message that we wanted it to take us out and was "committed" for the afternoon.

Given that we had full cylinders, and full dive kit we went for a shallow swim around the Nature reserve which was notable for the two large Ballan Wrasse which came within arms length of me, more Membranipora, whelks, sponges, weed.

It was also a good demonstration of why divers shouldn't dive in threes as we were constantly having to check each other and getting in each other's way! We surfaced and after some discussion filled the cylinders. Probably due to sitting in the sun all day I got a headache and decided not to dive when the Maid Maggie came back.

So I did surface cover and chatted to Glen about fishing, diving (and women- funnily enough) for half an hour whilst Devin, Phil and John explored a "diver training area" or scrap yard around the base of the Fort in the middle of Plymouth breakwater. In the evening the Newly qualified CDs and SDs (all passed) celebrated with Bovisand's infamous cocktails.

Food consisted of a Chinese takeaway (dodgy place again- I bailed out of the minibus when I realised where it was about to go!) or Pasta. Dann tried to eat his sausages, one of which made a brief bid for freedom but was stamped on by my foot.

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## Day five:- Tuesday 16th March 1999

Up early and left Bovisand with Jessica having bought a drysuit, the only suit she's ever had that's kept her warm!





Made our way down the A303 stopping to drop Tim off at Wincanton before reaching Cambridge in time for Shaun to get the minibus back in time to get the deposit back!

Thanks to everyone for making it a good trip, hopefully the next one will be even better. I promise to make sure everyone can go diving all the time, not to try and organise(?) anything to do with food!