



Littlehampton, Sussex  
4-6th April 2003

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## Trip Report by David Martin

### CUUEG Divers:

- Guy Coates
- John Kendall (DO)
- David Martin (XO)
- Rachel Seed
- Iain Smith (Q)
- Rowan Woodhouse

### Non-CUUEG Divers:

- Emma Faid
  - Sam Everitt
  - Vic Watson
  - "Dave"
  - "Gary"
  - two more from [Southampton University SAC](#)
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Boat: [Michelle Mary](#)

Accommodation: Colbern Hotel, South Terrace, Seafront, Littlehampton, BN17 5LQ 01903 714270

Transport: Ford Tourneo [8-seat SWB transit] + 1 Golf Estate from Cambridge (6 people). Others independently, by car

Fills: [Ocean View Diving](#)

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It was John's tenth anniversary of diving over the weekend, and a "big dive" was originally planned to celebrate this. However, with Izzy away from Portland, and a lack of scheduled work-ups, we decided to try something in the 30m range. A weekend of sub-hunting was planned. But, the boat wasn't in the water, and staying at Serena's when she couldn't dive due to work, was possibly a little rude.

CUUEG persuaded 6 divers to come from Cambridge, Rowan got a few more from Southampton, and with a few extras the trip was (almost) filled.

## Friday 4th April

Iain and David were due to set off early to collect cylinders from Kent Diving. However, they were late leaving Cambridge, mainly because David forgot his undersuit. Kit also had to be collected from both Chesterton and the CUUEG store. It was 3:15 before they arrived at the CUUEG store where Rachel had been waiting patiently. As Iain tried to make up lost time, he found that his laden Golf estate still had good acceleration, but the stopping distance was certainly greater than without kit!

[Kent Diving](#) stayed open an extra 5 minutes, which let them get a second Nitrox fill for Rachel. They were less impressed to find that they had put large "Breathing Air" stickers on the newly tested Argon bottles. They were resigned to defacing our uncluttered matt black cylinders, due to the new cylinder regulations, but a massive "Breathing Air" wrap was dangerous if we had argon in! Kent Diving did at least give complimentary (large) "Argon" stickers to use until more suitable stickers could be found.

As they continued south, Iain wondered several times if his car was transparent. It seemed that half a dozen drivers couldn't see him in 2 ½ tons of red metal and tried to use the same bit of road that he was on. Iain had apparently been not taken-up Emma's offer of directions to the Hotel. The Wimpy services (a poor substitute for Burger King) resolved this; taking a (probably) counterfeit £5 note in exchange for a Littlehampton & Selsey A-Z. The A-Z was a few years out of date, and coupled with certain roads meeting each other at multiple roundabouts, made for some "interesting" navigation.

We stayed in the Colbern Hotel where, with a few hours to kill, the inevitable kit-faff began. The three argon bottles needed sorting; the liberated "Breathing Air" stickers, finding good use as temporary marking's on John's twinset. Iain, fitting a pee valve, was to endure the torment provided by putting a hole into a perfectly good (new) suit. David's backup light (made by U.K. – a company who's products have caused him irritation in the past) had broken. Without a voltmeter, he tried to test the batteries by placing two on his tongue connecting the other terminals with a knife...he couldn't tell whether or not they were flat, but they were certainly leaking! At 9pm, the best place to buy batteries was the 24-hour Tesco's nearby. However, it's also worth noting that it's not realistically in walking distance unless one is both fit and bored. The rearguard arrived after 10 pm, just after the chip shops had closed, so we were forced to find a Kebab house.

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## Saturday 5th April

Our boat was [Michelle Mary](#), one of a growing number of South Coast boats with a tail-lift. We were due to meet the boat at 11am, a leisurely start even allowing time to set-up kit. However the concept of a lie-in on a dive trip was too alien for David, who got up to go for a run on the beach. The minibus went off to find the boat in the Marina, accessed from the other side of the river. Ten minutes later they realised that it wasn't there, but was in fact at the pontoon at the top of the road.

### Dive one – The Jaffa

The Jaffa was a 1,383 ton 260 foot merchantman, armed with a 4.7" gun. Sunk by UB-30 on 2-Feb-1918 she now lies well broken at 22-30m, depending on the tide. The gun is presumed to be under the mud. Due to the spring tide "slack" water was probably still 0.5 kt. The visibility was 2-3m, but only with torches; we were probably in the photopic zone beyond 20m. Those of us with 50W canister lights or bump-hat lights, were feeling slightly smug. The conditions showed that not all 50W bulbs are equal, the more expensive Osram bulbs proved distinctly better than Maplin imitations. The wreckage was quite encrusted, and there was a lot of life hanging shyly on the edge of torch-illumination. With the occasional bit of higher wreckage, there was a distinct possibility that a DSMB would hit a ceiling, or go through a hole on the way up; fortunately no-one had this problem, although one quickly had to say goodbye to the wreck and flow with the current.

### Dive two – Scenic Drift

Even on a spring tide drift dives on open coastlines (as opposed to in channels or certain headlands) rarely get that fast. We were dropped in 12-15m, on a "reef". Fortunately the vis was better than at corresponding depths in the morning, which made the large boulders interesting rather than dangerous obstacles. Most groups saw most of the others swimming along with the SMBs taking different courses despite their fairly similar positions on the surface. There was stuff to see, but most of us have already seen the UK seabed on previous dives, so weren't that excited. Certain divers decided to pass the time doing shutdown drills.

Back ashore, in the sunshine we bought ice-creams, and wondered if it was really April. Later, at 8pm, we set out to find food, only to find that most places weren't interested or were full. Eventually we found a small bistro with good food; but non-student prices.

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## Sunday 6th April

Littlehampton had no diveshop, so we were forced to make an early journey elsewhere to buy gas for the day. The duty fell to Rachel, as the driver of the minibus, and David. Both had to forgo a cooked breakfast for the early start. The journey was less than perfect. They tried a shortcut, then ended up leaving the route when the through-route direction signs were omitted from one of the roundabouts (which was at least on the map). Once in Selsey they were to go wrong again; the A-Z index gave the wrong grid-square, on the wrong page! Despite the fact that the shop was in "East Beach", and the grid square was on the west of the town, and didn't contain the road in question, David suggested they went to the area and looked around. After a number of dead-ends, they gave up, and phoned the shop for directions. We went to [Ocean View Diving](#) in Selsey, who are the second UK halcyon dealer (GAS Diving no longer supply kit). They were able to do nine nitrox and three air fills in an hour, trimix is "coming soon", hopefully along with a Haskel booster-pump. Ocean View were atypical for a dive-shop, allowing David to buy some regulator and cylinder neck O-rings, rather than muttering "health and safety"...although the cost was more dive-shop-like! We couldn't avoid the farce of slapping stickers everywhere (blaming the HSE), although they did agree to apply them gently, so that we could remove them easily outside the shop.

We were joined for the second day by Vic Watson (on an inspiration); known through [UKRS](#), and a friend of Rachel – Dave, who found us despite looking for a red minibus, which was off to get cylinders filled.

### Dive Three – The Cairndhu

Kendall McDonald's "Dive Sussex" told us that the Cairndhu was a 4,019 ton armed British merchantman carrying 6,250 tons of coal. The relative value of the figures surprised some of us. She was lost to UB-40 on 15-April-1918. Later in 1918 she was swept and dispersed to remove the hazard to shipping (prior to the sweep the masts were still above water). Yesterday the tide turned early, so today we made sure we were ready in advance. Iain and David, with the longest planned run-time, were to be first. Initially accusations were made, claiming that they had only planned a long dive to avoid marshalling. However, as they sat fully kitted on the transom, other divers were quite smug enjoying not balancing the best part of 50 Kg of dive kit as the boat pitched back and forth. The Cairndhu is less broken than the Jaffa, and being a larger wreck, has more stuff. No-one saw either the howitzer or the 4.7" deck gun, but quite a few saw engines, boilers and other large items. There were also a number of really large conger eels and crabs. Iain even wished that he had a snorkel with him; to use as crab hook.

#### Dive Four – Scenic Drift

Today's second dive, was billed as very "similar to yesterday's". The response to the news wasn't exactly great, and many of the group had second thoughts about going in. The weather on Sunday was overcast, so some people were colder than on Saturday, when it had been really sunny. The dive was much as expected. Afterwards, a number of the group suggested that we really ought to try to get two "proper" (read "wreck") dives in per day.

We had meant to drive back together, but Iain and David stayed rather longer than planned talking to Vic, and were just about to arrive at the services when the minibus group was leaving.