



Lymington
Dorset
23-25th May 2003

[Trip Report Index](#)

Organised by John Kendall
Trip Report by Matt Worsley

Divers:

- Mark Jones
- Rich van der Hoff
- Matt Worsley
- John Kendall
- Serena Dobson
- Rowan Woodhouse
- Zine Parker
- Iain Smith
- Lisa Lim

Friday 23rd May 2003

We were all being kindly put up in Serena's house in Lymington and were driving down Friday night. The traffic on the M25 was a little heavy but most of us travelling down got there by 11ish. Serena's tidy house was soon awash with various items of dive kit, from recharging torches to computers. JK and Iain, however, arrived in the early hours of Saturday morning: Apparently, just as they reached the M25 on their journey down, JK had a thought (I'm told he voiced this thought with the little-known phrase "f*ck-sh*t-f*ck-sh*t-f*ck-sh*t!"), it appears his drysuit had once again be left in its SafePlace™ (also refer to the [Weymouth Trimix Trip](#)).

Saturday 24th May 2003

We all tramped down to the harbour in various combinations of cars and Serena's landrover. There was some minor quayside fuff as people dug out dry suits, analysed nitrox and put sets together. We met the skipper, Dave Wenders, and boarded the boat, [Wight Spirit](#). It was a beautiful day and already fairly warm when we left port. We headed out past the Needles to the location of the wreck of the *Venezuela*.

Beautiful day it may have been but it was still fairly windy and the sea was rather a long way from flat as we set out. By the time we had be rolling along for a few minutes various divers began to look progressively more green and began to progressively search for interesting features on the horizon. My personal experiment to not bother with stugeron had failed, not helped by the moderately choppy conditions. Watching various pairs kit-up didn't help - people swaying and falling (not to mention the odd stomach-emptying moment interrupting quite a few buddy-checks) did not help!

Dive 1

Location: *The Venezuela*

Depth: 27.9m

Time: 39min

I'm not sure on the other pairings but myself and Rich were together on this dive. Kitted up and sweating we dropped in and descended the shot down onto the wreck. The skipper had done a good job and we arrived on the *The Venezuela* right amidships. The wreck itself was fairly intact and swarming with life including hundreds of crabs. *The Venezuela* was a twin engined steel river steamer (with 2 boilers) weighing 730 tons, she was torpedoed in 1918. Rich managed to skillfully extract one of the crabs from it's hiding place and bag it for later consumption...

We came around the port side of the wreck and rose up and over the boilers the top of which were at 26m. However even on a lovely sunny day the water was still fairly cold for me and my wetsuit by the time we had been down for 25 min, only a few minutes less than our planned time of 30 min. Rich prepared to send up the DSMB, all was well until Rich's reg decided to free flow and Rich, already busy with the blob, dropped it. The free flow was minor though and I retrieved (and "persuaded") the offending regulator and handed it back.

Ascent was nice and slow with safety stops at 9m and 6m. On reaching the surface I congratulated Rich on the crab he'd caught for dinner... before we realised we'd dropped the bag and the captured crustacean! Others had been more successful - Rowan had caught an enormous lobster that more than made up for our dopped crab. All in a all a good dive, even if it was a bit chilly towards the end. The free flow might not

have been serious but it still took it's tole, as I noticed when reading the marshal file later that day: "Rich, air out: 0".

Dive 2

Location: Christchurch Ledge (Mussel Beds)

Depth: Variable approx. 10-20m

Being rather cold and seasick I (unregrettedly) decided to sit this dive out. We had headed to shallower water and the dive was to be a drift in the slight current. I got the advantage of sitting in comfort watching people try and kit up, however, I hadn'd realised that I'd become the odd-job-man collecting spectacles, passing fins and finding masks! The various pairs dropped in and descended. Everyone was diving under an inflated DSMB, with most pairs deploying as soon as they reached the bottom.

After half an hour or so divers began returning to the surface and I took on odd-job-man role again helping people into the boat and filling in dive details. The divers all had considerably more than they descended with: huge bags of mussels, skewered flat-fish and captured crabs and lobsters. In total (as I recall) we now had a couple of kilos of mussels, 4 large flat-fish, 3 crabs and 2 huge lobsters (and we're talking 18-24" in length here), not to mention some extremely smug-looking CUUEG fisherpeople. As Iain put in his log book:

The Killing Fields

Armed with nets, gloves and sharp pointy things, we swept down upon them, our stomachs growling, our blood fired with the heat of the chase. Crabs, mussels, flatties; all fled before us. Except for the ones we saw first.

We headed back into the harbour and off-loaded all the kit. A lesson for future expeditions: don't put your caught crabs/lobsters in the same container or else they pull each other's arms off! Some went off to get more nitrox fills for Sunday's dives, the rest of us headed back to Serena's house - dropping me and Lisa off at the supermarket to get some chips, peas, lemon, tartar sauce (and seasickness tablets).



Cooking the food was just as interesting as catching it had been: Following Serena's guidance and her cookbook we proceeded to wash and start the mussels before getting on with filleting the fish - something I hadn't done before and something I'd strongly suggest you wear a big apron for and don't sniff to often.



Serena and I filleting! (fortunately for you these aren't scratch and sniff).

We don't seem to have a picture of the lobsters or their execution... The deed was carried out by me and JK, holding the offending lobster down on the chopping board and cleaving it down the middle with the a huge knife (this was the point where JK revealed his murderous instincts as lobster don't halve easily!). Everything prepared we got on with simmering the mussels, frying the fish, boiling the crabs and roasting the lobsters. The final saga in the seafood epic was when Rowan and John came to break up the lobster "...do you have a hammer Serena? This f*cker is armoured like a tank...".

Sunday 25th May 2003

We were all much more squared away in boarding the boat and getting underway today. It was a cloudier day but still dry as we ploughed out towards our first dive site: The *Warwick Deeping*, a steel trawler weighing 445 tons that was shelled and sunk in 1940 at the start of World

War II. The wreck is upright and still fairly intact with wheelhouse.

Dive 3

Location: *Warwick Deeping*

Depth: 33.9m

Time: 33min

(This wreck is also the subject of the Diver magazine October 2003 [Wreck Tour 56](#).)

I was diving with Mark this morning. The descent down to the wreck was quite a long one, leaving a slight swell on the surface we dropped steadily and it got dark and cold very quickly. The vis was not much more than 4-5m at best but lots of larger particles meant it was very dark down on the wreck.

We dropped onto the stern and began to work our way forwards down the starboard side. Got down to the wheelhouse and had a peek through the windows. There were some small vents/funnels next to the wheelhouse, one of which had a strange rippling piece of cloth out of it - I decided to investigate and gave the cloth several good tugs to try and pull it free of the pipe before Mark tapped me on the shoulder and signaled a "I wouldn't do that...". Mental note to ask him later. We came across Serena and James before we moved over the bows and back down the port side. Shot a blob from the stern and started our ascent. Did 1 min at 9m and 3 at 6m for safety and broke the surface into a reasonable swell. I was pretty chilly - having had to hold my shivering arms still during the deco stops so I could read the depth! Mark wasn't so warm either after his leaky drysuit had deposited a pint or two of cold water into his legs.

Sometime later I asked Mark about the cloth in the pipe "...that wasn't a good idea to be pulling on that", he said, "...it was an eel!".

Everyone seemed to have had a reasonable dive but some seasickness was still in the air (not for me though - stugeron is good stuff!) and JK didn't feel too well in particular. The skipper made some suggestions as to a second (sheltered given the swell) site but the lack of any general enthusiasm soon made it clear no-one really wanted another dip that day. So, cups of tea and cheese slice butties in hand, we headed back to Lymington.

The trip back, unloading, going back to Serena's, packing-up and heading home were all uneventful (as far as I'm aware) so that's the end of that. Thanks to JK for organising, Serena for accommodating and to everyone for the diving.