



Baltimore South-West Ireland 8-17th August 2003

[Trip Report Index](#)

Trip report by David Martin

Divers:

- Paul Atkinson
 - Paul Bullen
 - Serena Dobson
 - James Donnelly
 - Sam Everitt
 - Mark Holmes (Senior Treasurer)
 - John Kendall (Diving Officer)
 - David Martin (Trip Organiser, Junior Treasurer)
 - Iain Smith (Equipment Officer)
 - Rowan Woodhouse
-

Photos: [Paul Bullen](#), Ireland photos [here](#) (all pictures © 2003 Paul Bullen).

Boat: "Gaiscanan", [Baltimore Diving](#)

Accommodation: [Baltimore Diving](#)

Transport (main party): 3.5T Transit (LWB/High-roof), Landrover Defender 110-SW. Other transport used due to the different starting times/places. [Swansea Cork Ferry](#)

Gas fills: Air supplied as part of package from [Baltimore Diving](#). We took "J" cylinders of O₂ and He with us, due to the cost of bottled gas in Ireland.

Water temp: 14-17°C

Costs:

- Diving + Accommodation + Air - £3,300
- Ferry Crossing - £944
- Food / other consumables £347
- Fuel + [Severn Bridge Tolls](#) - £187
- Van Hire - £460
- Total - £5,238 (excludes O₂/He) (equivalent to £525 pp)
- Diving /medical insurance - £15pp

Books:

- Shipwrecks of the Irish Coast vol.2 (1998) Bourke, E.J. ISBN-09523027.
- Shipwrecks of Ireland (2000) Bourke, E.J. ISBN-0752417649.

There is certainly scope for someone to write a dive guide for the region! However, until this happens, try these two for some preliminary information. There are 3 books in the first series, vol.2, is the most useful, although some of the wrecks appear in other volumes. The large number of entries means that many entries provide little more than the date of sinking and approximate location. It certainly isn't a dive guide to the wrecks! The 2nd book contains mainly contemporary black & white photos of the vessels when afloat or sinking.

Planning

This trip was billed as the "advanced" trip for the year, and was initially opened to Dive Leaders and above. With the trip unfilled, it was opened to those outside of CUUEG. We were joined by Sam Everitt from [Southampton University SAC](#), and Paul Bullen from [Edinburgh University SAC](#).

At the start of the trip, seven of us held the BSAC "Advanced Nitrox" qualification, (or above), with the plan to finish the training for the other three on the trip. We were all keen to dive nitrox (or trimix), which [Baltimore Diving](#) could supply...just not in the quantities we had in mind. "J" cylinders of oxygen and helium have to be imported from the UK, which makes them expensive; most divers therefore accept the constraints of diving air.

CUUEG, found an alternative solution: hire "J" cylinders, and buy the gas in the UK, and import it ourselves. A conservative estimate approach was taken to calculating the amount of gas required. We had six days diving. The morning dive required 4x 24L trimix fills (usually 21/35), 7x 7L 50% fills, 6x 15L 32% morning. The afternoon would require O₂ and air tops to the trimix to bring to approx 30/25 (150bar) and 6x 12L EANx-36. The gas was also to be used for a weekend's trimix diving to [Portland](#) a fortnight beforehand. We estimated 5 x "J"s of helium, 8 x "J"s of oxygen.

The helium estimation was accurate (we equalised on the last fill for the Friday's dive). We only used five of the eight "J"s of oxygen. There were several reasons:

- The non-nitrox qualified divers, needed air at the start of the week, (the plan assumed that they would be qualified before the trip, or at the latest, on the first day).
- Single cylinder mixes were often weaker than anticipated (eg 30% and sometimes even 27% in the morning, and usually 32% in the afternoon).
- The 50% stages were not always used by the nitrox divers, and if carried, not always breathed.
- Due to the size of the cascade, we could often top cylinders from part filled, rather than always emptying them for a full fill.
- We took six of the seven stage cylinders, and all the twinsets full.

Mark Holmes ordered the gas, John and I spent the evening of Monday 21st July (ie just before their trip to Portland) moving the first eleven "J" cylinders to the kitstore. They moved the remaining two cylinders on their return from Portland.

The trimix dives were planned on GUE's Decoplanner software, using GF=20/90 as a starting point. A typical ascent from 21m - on EANx50 was: 5@21m, 1 @18m, 1@15m, 2@12m, 4@9m, 10@6m, 1m/min to surface.

In the week leading up to the trip, we filled the nitrox cylinders, collected the second "D" cylinder of O₂ from CamBSAC and bought non-perishable food from Tesco's, and prepped the kit in the kitstore.



The van and blending station.

Friday 7th August (and the transport plan)

Various plans had come and gone regarding the transport arrangements, we were probably on version nine by the day! I collected the van at 08:00, when Willhire opened, and met JK, James and Paul at the kitstore for loading. James and Paul remained in Cambridge to do a little more shopping, and to wait for Iain to finish his lunchtime shift. Paul was to drive to Swansea the most direct way (A14/M6/A449 retracing part of my initial journey) with one eye on the clock to make the planned check-in time. John and I drove the van "the long way round" to Swansea, collecting kit and Paul B on the way.

The van had no air conditioning, and even with the windows wound down the heat wave that we were experiencing made the cab unpleasant. The first stop was Rowan's (south of M4 J15) to collect kit from Sam and Rowan. There were already three vans of a range of sizes at the house, we added a fourth; fortunately Rowan has a large drive! We were slightly ahead of schedule, so allowed ourselves a short pit stop, including refilling some of the already empty water bottles.

Leaving Rowan's drive was the first time that reverse gear had been required. Reverse was a higher gear ratio than first, which combined with the excess weight and slight hill forced us to burn the clutch somewhat to get out. The van's next stop was Bristol Temple Meads Station, to collect Paul B and his kit. Paul had come from Edinburgh, which required changing trains once with all his kit en-route; he had been waiting about an hour before the van arrived. Then it was back onto the motorway and onwards on to Swansea. It may be worth noting that large vans have to pay commercial vehicle rates at the Severn crossing, which feel extortionate.

Sam drove to Serena's with Rowan. Serena arrived early from work in Southampton, and the three went swimming. The rest of the party found out by phone whilst sat in traffic on the M4 and were less than amused!

When we arrived in Swansea, we were unable to locate a long-stay public car park for Paul near the ferry, so I called the ferry company to ask for a suggestion. An answerphone message informed him that the ferry's departure time had been delayed from 21:00 to 01:30. Finding nothing worth watching at the cinema, we killed the time with a pizza out. Bizarrely an order for Tuna pizza was written down as "Pineapple", which resulted in two free pizzas, and helped to kill a little more time.

The check in was a little nerve-wracking, we were slightly concerned about the gross-weight of the van as we drove towards the weighbridge, and also when asked to open the van for inspection, in case anyone worried about the gas we had. We had a little laugh when the port authority asked us if we owned the vehicle and had packed it ourselves. I pointed to the foot-high "Willhire" letters, and then opened the back doors. A cursory check later, and wished well for our diving, we were waved through.

We had two-fourth berth cabins, and one two-berth cabin. We only had nine, not ten people on the ferry, and, much to the feigned(?) dismay of some hopeful trip members I offered Serena the two-berth cabin to herself. It was about 2am once we'd settled in, but we treated ourselves to a drink, since the bar was still open.

Saturday 8th August

Mark Holmes was took a separate ferry crossing from Fishguard, having spent the night at his parent's, and drove down to meet us at Baltimore. However, due to the delay with boarding the ferry, he arrived significantly before the rest of us.

Perishables were bought at Skibbereen, the last town of note before Baltimore. The lonely planet guidebook describes Baltimore as a "small fishing village of 220 people"; however, it probably has about 2,000 people, two dive centres, not to mention several pubs. After lunch, most of the rest of Saturday was spent prepping kit, and sorting ourselves out.

Our prior experiences with drop bottles suggested that a bottle merely lowered near the divers would not be seen. I had designed a "square" to be dropped over a diver's DSMBs, to lead them to the drop bottle. The "square" consisted of a 1.5m square, made of 22mm plastic pipe, attached to a drop bottle (on it's own buoy) by 7m of line. The four poles would collapse for stowage, but could be assembled in about 30s, and then was rigid enough to drop or throw over the DSMBs. The square was finished just prior to the trip. In addition to the "usual" faff, we had to test it in the harbour, as well as explain the deployment protocol to the trip participants. The test in the harbour showed that the bits floated and sank appropriately, so we planned a true practice for the end of day one.

Baltimore Diving Centre owns an apartment next to their air station for the guests. There were four bedrooms sleeping between 4 and 6, two bathrooms a large kitchen-dining room, and a small sitting room. We'd rented the whole apartment, which gave us loads of space. The sitting room was soon turned into an office, complete with four laptops, three printers and one laminator.

The boat was named Gaiscanan, after the local Gaiscanan channel. We were grateful that John (of Baltimore Diving) had suggested limiting the trip to ten divers. The boat was adequately sized for the ten of us, including spare and group kit; 12 single tank divers would have been fine too.

We met the owner, John Kearney to discuss plans. John was aware that we were bringing some of our own gas, but was somewhat taken aback when we opened the van! He showed us how to use his compressor, gave us the rules (no noise when there were diners in the restaurant) and let us deal with the filling.

Sunday 10th August

The accommodation is fairly near the harbour. It's easily walkable, but significantly further than you'd want to do in kit. Parking at the pier was limited, so I usually drove the kit down in the van, before returning the van to outside the accommodation.

11:10 - Kowloon Bridge, bow section (max depth 29m*)

** Most sites of the morning sites offered a significant range of max depths due to their size; thus divers could choose a "max depth" for a dive considerably shallower than the maximums listed. For some sites, one could also venture deeper than we did. The exception to the above is the U260, which stands only a couple of metres above the seabed.*

The Kowloon Bridge was 90,000-ton ore bulk-carrier, with 165,000-ton iron-ore, and 2,000-ton oil, she sank on 22-Nov-1986. Sheltering from the weather in Bantry Bay, she lost her starboard anchor and damaged her steering gear, before striking the rocks known as "the Stags". The crew were rescued by helicopter. Her sister ship, The Derbyshire, was lost without trace in the South China Sea, possibly due to weakness where frame 65 joins the bridge. It has since been rumoured that she was carrying illicit radioactive cargo, although such allegations seem unfounded. She is the largest diveable wreck in European waters by a considerable margin.

As we headed towards the wreck we noticed a pair of dolphins playing off the port bow. The "diving" was going well before we even got in the water. The dolphins stayed with us for a few minutes enabling those who'd brought cameras the chance to attempt to photograph them. Sadly "attempt" seems to be the operative word, as none of the pictures have any significant amount of dolphin in them.

We dropped in very close to the bows, with a depth of approx 6m to the top of the wreck (with the seabed at 25m). There was a significant surge running, so most divers headed down in the comparative shelter of the wreck. The viz was 15-20m, typical for the week, which really helped to show off the immense scale of the wreck. Any given bit of wreck would look familiar to those diving in wrecks in British water, plumose anemones, dead-men's fingers and the like covered almost all of the external steel, softening the outline slightly. The wreck was liberally scattered with sunstars and starfish, their reds and purples standing out amongst the predominantly orange and white colour palette of the soft encrustation. Massive winches sit on the bows, but due to the current, we didn't see them. Swimming aft, several pairs saw the starboard anchor, which weighs 25tons, hanging from its chain in the hawse pipe.

It was soon obvious that the Kowloon Bridge was a massive wreck. She is also mainly intact. Swimming over the edge of a hold one could see perhaps 5m below the iron ore pellets, which made up the cargo, forming undulating piles. Swimming out across these we could lose all four edges of the hold, in spite of the good visibility. In the middle of such a void, you just kept swimming in the direction you started in - compass being useless amongst so much ferrous material! Despite, or perhaps because of her size, Rowan and I managed to lose the wreck. Swimming through a broken bulkhead, we continued onto the iron ore. Amongst various pipes, girders and broken metalwork. Two or three minutes the iron ore began to thin out a little, and show patches of encrusted surface. These looked similar enough to the steel surfaces on the ship to be assumed to be steelwork. However, as the iron ore thinned further, it became apparent, that this was the real seabed, and not the wreck beneath them. Clearly losing such a large ship, in good viz would have been somewhat embarrassing to admit to, so we started to search for the wreck. With a little guesswork as to the direction of the wreck, helped by heading towards the greater concentrations of iron ore and then broken metalwork, we were able to find the wreck...after ten minutes of hard swimming.



Dolphins, (taken later in the week).

Between dives we usually returned to Baltimore, which allowed air tops whilst we had lunch at the accommodation. John had devised an efficient rota for the jobs

16:50 - The Illyrian (max depth 21m)

The Illyrian, like many other wrecks came to ground on the coast and sank rapidly within 50m of the shore. The rugged coastline continued below water, until about 20m, where the kelp-covered gullies were replaced by a gently sloping coarse sand bottom. Parts of the Illyrian lay in the shallow gullies, whilst the boilers were on the sandy seabed, close to the edge of the sand/rock edge. We dropped into the gullies in the shallows, and swam up and down through the kelp fronds enjoying the free ride offered by the surge, whilst trying to avoid it carrying us back to where we'd started each cycle. Coming off the rock to the sand the debris was a little more concentrated. The boilers themselves could just about be seen from the edge of the rocks, but a from about 5m out onto the sand were much more obvious. The boiler stands about 3m proud of the seabed, there is a small passage through the boiler, which can be swum through, whilst looking at the heat exchange tubes and other detail around you. Those that found the boilers were rather happier than those who spent most of the dive looking at sand. However, clearly not in the same league as the Kowloon Bridge!

Many of the afternoons we used for teaching. Rowan took Sam for the first dive of his Combined Nitrox course. We also tried to swap buddy pairs, so that everyone dived with someone that they hadn't dived with before, where possible. This would also mean that most people would get a photo of themselves when they buddied Paul B, some of which are at on his [website](#).

17:50 - Testing the "square"

John and I, would pretend to be on an ascent from a trimix dive, with a gas failure, and were accompanied by Mark Holmes and his underwater video camera. Mark and Paul would film bits of the topside action too, so that we could see how it all went, and possibly compile a training video.

We both launched DSMBs then began the simulated ascent to 6m. John then sent his yellow "out-of-gas" signal DSMB up his line. "Surface cover" then assembled the "square, dropped it over John's DSMBs, lowered the drop bottle in, and waited. The gas was received and John sent a red DSMB up to confirm that the gas has been received. Mark ascended, whilst we stayed, ostensibly to stow the bits of the drop bottle. After a suitable pause I deployed a green DSMB (the meaning of which was known to all who had been to Scapa the previous year).

The standard DSMB code (red = OK, yellow = send gas), was useful, but had left many of the other colours unassigned. A "green blob" means "send reading material for the decompression stop". No such suitable reading material existed on the boat; however, James stepped

up, producing a quick cartoon sketch entitled "a drysuit named desire", which was send to the magazine-less divers.

Monday 11th August

12:00 - Kowloon Bridge, stern section (max depth 36m)

The Kowloon Bridge is so big that unless you have scooters, or do nothing else all dive, you're not going to swim from one end to the other. We chose to be dropped near the stern for our second dive on her. The stern was the last section to sink.

In common with other large modern cargo ships, the superstructure was situated aft of the cargo holds. It rose up 10m above the deck, with the funnel stack and mast rising further up. Compared to the rest of the ship, the stern seems quite broken. The structure is quite a lot more complicated than the holds, and there's a lot to swim around. The propeller is still apparently in-situ, but despite the best effort of two buddy pairs to follow the skipper's directions, none of us saw it. It's obvious at the stern that this is a big ship. The wreckage extends well beyond the visibility almost all the time as you swim around, whilst winches pipes and girders are just bigger than counterparts on other ships.



Growth on the Kowloon Bridge (stern).

17:00 - The Dido (max depth 22m)

695-ton iron barque, built 1859. Sank 26-Aug-1883, 1-mile East of Kedge Island. Fourteen of the crew were rescued.

The Dido is well broken. She ran aground on the shore, and came to rest in shallow water. Like the other wrecks in approx 20m, over the years the waves have broken the ship, leaving only isolated sections of wreckage. She is most noted for the number of anchors in the vicinity. The six of us diving in pairs found the wreckage this time, but most didn't stay long before moving along the shoreline through the kelp and rocky gullies. It was several metres from the gully-bottom to the top of the kelp, staying within the gullies helped to reduce sawtooths in the dive profile, and also kept you out of the current, but got repetitive quite quickly.

Further teaching was planned for the afternoon: I took Paul A to continue twinset drills and recap midwater DSMB deployments. Sam and Mark were to do their Advanced nitrox assessment, with John and Iain teaching as a four. However, on entry, John lost his fin, so the plan had to be changed to become a search dive, including forcing the students to break the "MOD" set for the assessment to enable the fin to be found. During the mid-water DSMB deployment Mark jammed his reel, dragging him up several meters before he controlled the ascent; which caused his eardrum to burst. On the surface, Mark seemed remarkably relaxed, although he mentioned that on past experience, the pain was likely to start in about 24 hours.

The visibility was significantly worse than previous dives, due to plankton; but this had an unexpected bonus - a baby basking shark. The shark was in the area whilst we were diving, but not near enough for anyone to see it underwater. Most people were able to see it on the boat, after the dive, before it swam off.



A juvenile basking shark.



Tuesday 12th August

Mark was unable to dive for the rest of the trip. Since he had a car, he decided not to hang around and watch the rest of us having fun. He headed home whilst we were out diving. The rest of us had an early start - we watched the sunrise and the moon setting at the harbour; but we were rewarded by the attention of an inquisitive seal.

08:00 - U260 (max depth 45m) and nearby reef (max depth 25m)

The U260, a type VIIC U-boat, was allegedly damaged by mine laid by HMS Apollo, near the Fastnet Rock. She sank off Union Hall 13-Mar-1945. The crew evacuated the U-boat, and rowed to shore. The U-boat's papers, charts, manuals, and enigma code wheels floated to the surface in a sealed container, they were discovered by a local and handed over to the British. The damage to the submarine is very superficial. A mine is likely to have caused far greater damage, and certainly not allowed the time for a full orderly evacuation of all crew. Damage from a bomb dropped from an aircraft seems more likely. The Captain probably used it as an excuse to get out of the war.

The U260 has been regularly dived on air, and as Dive Leaders 45m is within the BSAC recommended 50m maximum depth, however, the trip had been advertised with notice that the CUUEG [SDPs](#) specify a maximum END of 40m. Therefore only those using Trimix: Iain, John, Rowan and myself would be diving it. Whilst I support the 40m limit, it didn't make planning the morning any easier, and to say that I felt uncomfortable with this as we headed out would have been somewhat of an understatement!

The trimix divers in general had the longest run times in the morning, so usually went in first. But since, the reef was the more tide-dependent site, the roles were reversed; the four of us went last. Due to the tide, John had shotted the sub with weight made from 30kg of heavy chain - such shots help damp the tugging due to the waves, and also since the chain links lift individually it gives an indication of how much lift the liftbag is producing.

The U260 sits on a flat level bottom, with on her port side. It was our first U-boat, having had the weather against us on several attempts to dive the U-772 out of Portland. The shot was placed next to the damaged at the bow. The torpedo tubes and pressure hull are visible here. After dealing with the shot, we swam aft, along the deck. We had good visibility, natural sunlight, and only a moderate current. Just beyond the damaged area are torpedo loading hatches, although whilst underwater, Iain could have sworn that they were mine chutes, (which would be inconsistent with a type VIIC). Further back are the conning tower, periscopes, snorkel (in its housing) and other features, almost all perfectly preserved. The sky periscope even has working optics - part of the glass has had the encrustation cleaned away by previous divers to. As we swam aft, we noticed John and Iain about to ascend, due to John's suit flooding. There was obviously nothing that Rowan or I could do, so we continued with our dive. We passed over the wreck at the stern, onto the starboard propeller, and then swam back to the bow, before coming back along the deck and past the conning tower. Swimming the 66m length of the wreck helped get a feel for the shape of the U-boat, but the most interesting bits are certainly around the conning tower. Towards the end of the dive the current had started to build, so we made a free ascent to 36m watching as the current carried us out of sight of the wreck, and then deployed our DSMBs.



Kitting up, L-R: John, Iain, David & Rowan.

13:30 - The Hourtien (max depth 22m)

Ran aground in fog, on 15-Sep-1931, just East of the old Cape Clear lighthouse.

The dive-site was very similar to yesterday afternoon's - dispersed wreckage on a sand & shingle bottom next to a rocky kelp-covered slope. John sat the dive out, to dry his undersuit and repair the drysuit. I learnt a lesson this dive - don't fix something at the bottom that can be fixed

at the surface; whilst removing and refitting a stage and twinset is a hassle on the boat, it's also a hassle at 15m! (*Edit - it's a lesson that I seemed to forget a year later...*)

Wednesday 13th August

07:50 - Kowloon Bridge, bow section (max depth 32m)

We returned to the bow section for a second dive. Iain and John were particularly keen to explore a penetration that started at 6m, and went a long way within the ship. Rowan and I also planned a penetration, but to avoid crowding, at a different site - since we weren't aware of a second significant route, we picked the first opening we came to. The inside of the Kowloon Bridge has a significant amount of rust and silt, just waiting to be kicked up and after the second bulkhead natural light has all but disappeared. It's a big wreck and so it would be easy to get lost. There's stuff to see on the inside, but it's probably not worth doing unless you've done the outside already. (Six weeks later, I'd find out just how little I knew about line laying on the DIR-Fundamentals course.) We decided that the iron ore pellets would make a great source of free weight for "stuff", so since I was planning to busy myself in the wreck, Paul A and Sam offered to collect some and send it up on a liftbag. I doubt that anyone will miss the five kilos from 160,000 tons, but I regret that I haven't yet found a use for it yet. I suffered a reel jam on my DSMB deployment, so in accordance with agreed procedures shot my yellow backup DSMB. However, we also use yellow DSMBs to signify "lost decompression gas - please send gas", so the surface cover deployed the drop bottle, as per the marshalling instructions. Since Iain and John had surfaced nearby, and came to check that we needed assistance. We had a while to think things through on the ascent and afterwards... (We now also carry an additional red DSMB, and use spools for primary DSMB deployment.)

12:10 - HMS Alondra (max depth 24m)

A 2,444 ton 298 ft destroyer sank 29-Dec-1916, sixteen of the crew were rescued by lifeboat, others scrambled to shore and up ladders on the cliffs.

The wreck of the Alondra is in a deep gully. We were dropped next to the top end of the gully, in a shallow gully running at right angle to the one with the wreck in. A five-metre swim brought us to the top of the Alondra's gully. The navigation was so simple that even John and Iain, who had thus far missed the afternoon wreck each day, could find it. The wreckage is liberally scattered along the gully, part of the keel and ribs lie up the bottom. Towards the end of the gully are two upright boilers, each 3m high. These can be swum under and into, although there's very limited space within them. We then turned left, following the shore, the slope of which quickly turned into a wall dive (although you could swim along the bottom, which was only a couple of meters deeper if you preferred).

Back on the boat I was given a rescue management scenario. Since John and Serena were slightly low on gas, they decided to start earlier than the plan. I noticed the yellow DSMB whilst I was still getting out of my kit. Iain's demeanour quickly informed me that it was a scenario - oh well better than the real thing. We deployed the drop bottle, and then helped Rowan into his kit, to drop onto John and Serena. Shortly afterwards James and Paul A surfaced following a "buoyant ascent". Paul soon "lost consciousness", so following the skipper's advice we parbuckled him onboard. To help me save my two casualties (one non-breathing casualty who appeared to have a burst lung, and a second with severe DCI) I had one diver and the skipper. When John, Serena and Rowan came up, Serena was unhappy about something. After establishing that it wasn't part of the scenario, but that the scenario should continue, I asked her rather curtly to get out the way, (Serena - sorry) John went with her, but with Rowan back, I did at least have a two assistants. On the debrief I found out that Paul had "died" 10 minutes after being brought onto the boat. Paul had a tension pneumothorax; sadly for Paul, the three people who knew how to treat such a problem were himself, his incoherent and scarcely conscious buddy, and Iain, who callously stood over him with a clipboard :)

I learnt a lot from it - you learn more from doing these things than planning them (and fortunately we've never had to deal with anything this bad in real life!) We hit the usual real/scenario problems; eg. casualties whose' condition is supposed to be changing, but who look the same. Who to involve - I assumed at the start that I should ignore the two PADI OW divers who were randomly on the boat that afternoon; since it was only a drill; although Iain told me part way through that I should use them...

Thursday 14th August

08:40 - Fastnet Rock (max depth 36m)

The Fastnet Rock is supposedly one of the best scenic dives in the British Isles. Much of CUUEG would beg to differ. By the time we got to dive it was cloudy and overcast, which didn't help but there were bigger concerns, notably the lack of fish. The anemones and the like which covered the rock were little different to those we'd seen earlier in the week. There were a few sunstars, starfish, and crabs, but most people saw fish. John and I saw more fish in any given 30 seconds of our dive on the Salsette (a fortnight before the Ireland trip) than everyone together saw on the Fastnet Rock. Paul evidently had a better dive than some of us - his photos almost seem to have been taken at a different site to how I remember the dive!

Above water the Rock is dramatic, rising out of the Atlantic over 3 miles from the nearest land, topped with its lighthouse, and with waves breaking themselves over the dark rock. The rock structure itself was quite interesting, with steep sides, clefts and deep swim-through fissures. It's somewhere to be flexible with your dive plan - the currents are strong. Rowan and I were forced over a ridge at 18m during our 21m decompression stop. James lost his double-ender, and then his spool during his ascent, but was able to retrieve the spool from the surface and borrow another double-ender for the rest of the week.

We had lunch on Cape Clear, an Island a few miles off the mainland.



A rare sight (for us): a fish at the Fastnet Rock...and yes, the photo is the right way up!

13:20 - The Nestorian (max depth 19m)

A 6,000 ton, 400 ft general cargo ship, with a mixed load of cotton, shells and cases, and pig iron ingots (8 ft long by 6-inch square). Wrecked on the coast of Cape Clear, within a week of HMS Alondra, on 2-Jan-1917. All but one of the 80 crewmen was saved.

Many of the cargo of iron ingots lie together on the seabed, able to resist the waves rather better than the Nestorian, which carried them. We started our dive near the ingots then drifted away looking at the scattered wreckage, before starting the "scenic drift" which typifies many second dives.

Friday 15th August

08:50 - Kowloon Bridge, amidships (ish) (max depth 40m)

We'd been able to do what we'd wanted to each day so far, and so we'd achieved the dives that I'd planned, so the decision of what to dive for the last morning was made democratically. With the possibility of doing more than one site, if they were nearby, and with people putting 1st and 2nd choices down, it all got a little complicated. Since the stern section of the Kowloon Bridge was at least 2nd on everyone's list I decided that we'd all dive it - which would simplify the marshalling.

In true "last day" fashion, the dive didn't go quite to plan...the shot missed the wreck. The wreck is over 300m long, and weighs over 250,000-tons including cargo...the shot missed the wreck!

To be fair - the shot landed on the iron-ore, but not the stuff in the wreck. John and Iain were the first pair down the shot; noticing that the shot isn't on the wreck, Iain pulled out his reel, to begin a circular search! However, given that the shot was in 18m of water, and the stern was in 36m the other option was "head down", or "head to where there's more iron-ore". Sadly a broken HP hose ended John's dive before they got to the wreck, but the other pairs all got to the wreck. Rowan and I hit the wreck amidships. Without knowing which side of it we were, we headed along the length. We spent 15minutes swimming almost non-stop - I think that we swam most of the length of the ship. We got to the stern with only 3 minutes of bottom time remaining, which wasn't enough time to find the prop. We'll have to come back!



Rowan & David on the Kowloon Bridge.

14:30 The Illyrian (max depth 23m)

The choice of afternoon sites was made easier by no one having strong views on any of them! The site we'd enjoyed most was the Alondra, but this was inaccessible due to the tides. Since only Paul B and myself had seen the boilers last time, it would give the others a chance to too.

Due to Serena's popularity with certain other club members, I'd managed to spend a second week-long dive trip with her, without diving with her. Fate intervened again, as a mysterious O-ring blow-out occurred just before the start of the dive. Since John and Serena were already in the water, they did the dive as a pair, whilst I fixed my kit and joined Rowan and Iain. The dive was uneventful and unspectacular for the majority. It was Serena's 100th dive, and as a surprise, John had brought along two 25cl bottles of wine. Drinking when surrounded by water isn't as easy as when on land, particularly when the beverage is in a glass bottle, not a squeezable pouch...however, they did manage to drink enough, on the 6m stop, to feel tipsy. (CUUEG members are reminded that the Diving Officer's permission must be sought before alcohol is consumed during dives.)

During the dive the wind had picked up, and the return journey was in the only rough seas we experienced all week. Sadly my seasickness caught up with me, and I just curled up on the deck and waited for Baltimore harbour. John and Iain had other plans..."Helioko". For those who haven't experienced the delights of "Helioko", I'll explain: "Helioko" is derived from "karaoke", it involves singing well-known (pop)-songs whilst breathing helium (trimix). How out of tune one is can be altered by the proportion of hyperventilation on trimix and the number of normal breaths in between. The effect is amusing, but disproportionately so to the participants.

We went out for a meal since it was the last night. There was no gas blending, no cooking, no instructing, and precious little organising required. Most of us hadn't drunk anything all week, so the chance to stop and unwind with a pint (or several) was a welcome change. I fell asleep...not in the restaurant like in [Scapa](#) but sitting on a bollard at the edge of the street. Clearly the late nights throughout the trip had finally caught up. I walked back to the accommodation, only to find that Iain still had our room key in the pub. I seriously considered sleeping in the sitting-room, and even on the grass next to the harbour, but decided to return to the pub and get the key.



L-R: David, John, Iain, Paul A, Serena, James, Paul B, Rowan & Sam. (Mark had already left).

Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th August

Our ferry check-in was 08:00, which required leaving at 06:20. Sadly there was no delay, like the previous weekend, which would have given us extra time in bed. There were a few grumbles, but there was limited flexibility in transport plans, and I was one of the drivers anyway.

We made the check-in with ample time, although not all people were in the vehicles that they were booked in with; in the event, this wasn't a problem, but I didn't want to risk it. A couple of minor hiccups occurred at check-in - our booking reservations had been lost: the check-in staff were unable to confirm that we had an over-height space for the van, but again the fear was groundless. We had also lost our cabin reservation, but were able to put our name on the reserve list and get one. The cabins aren't as essential as for the night crossings. A 2-berth cabin was fine for our needs, four of us slept for various parts of the day, and we could all store stuff in it.

On arrival at Swansea, Paul A collected his car, relieved that the port authorities hadn't used their extensive powers to dispose of it as a threat to national security...he then took Paul B to a B&B, near to Swansea Station. We then drove to Serena's parents in Etchilhampton, where Serena's mother fed us, and then insisted that we stayed the night. Rowan and Sam left, but those travelling to Cambridge stayed the night. We left at 6am, so that I could get back (it was my mother's birthday). Ever the hosts/hostesses the Dobsons got up to provide us with coffee and see us off.

We decided to award a couple of "prizes" for events during the week, however most of these weren't written down. But John awarded himself the prize for "most broken kit during the week", below is his list:

- 1 x Drysuit (U260 Dive)
- 1 x Canister lamp (Kowloon Bridge penetration dive)
- 1 x HP swivel (Kowloon Bridge 2nd Stern dive)

- 1 x Fin (well almost lost, rather than broken, 2nd day 2nd dive)
- 1 x HP hose (Kowloon Bridge, last day)
- 1 x Necklace (just before a dive, can't remember which one)
- 1 x buddy's sense of humour (U260) (*added by Iain*)