



Stoney Cove
July 30th 2005

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Organised by Ian Gregory

Trip report by Karin Müller and Ian Gregory (but mainly by Karin. Almost entirely, in fact)

The line-up:

- Steve Clark
- Leigh Connor
- Freija Glansdorp
- Ian Gregory
- Karin Müller
- Andy Peel
- Matt Worsley

Originally, we had wanted to go to St. Abbs for the weekend and everybody was geared up and looking forward to meeting George the wolf fish, but it wasn't to be. Ian had checked with the St. Abbs Dive Centre at Scoutscroft, and the wind was blowing a force 6-7 north-easterly, with waves crashing over the harbour wall, and the harbour was '*just boiling*' (imagine the wind whistling in the background, and a strong Scottish accent, and you just about get the gist of the telephone call). According to Matt, the St. Abbs curse was upon CUUEG, again! Rather than travelling all that distance to be blown out, the caravan booking was craftily rescheduled for a later date (so we didn't lose our deposit), and an alternative was sought. So what do divers do, all ready, packed up and the adrenalin juices going round? They go to Stoney Cove. And a great idea it was too!!!

We met at the kitstore on Saturday morning at 7 am. Remind me, why am I doing this?! We stuff kit in my little car, and I'm filled with pride how much it will take until we drive off and my bum is scraping the road. We get to Stoney Cove, first time for me, and I'm blown away: the site looks great, scenic, almost dramatic, with steep cliffs into the water. The place is crawling with divers everywhere. While some of us are queuing for a bacon butty from Captain Nemo's, somebody is starting to chat to me. '*Ah, I really like it at Stoney when it is quiet like this. Got up at half past 2 this morning to get here early.*' Obviously I have to work on my dedication...

Freija and Andy are teaming up as a sports diver buddy pair, and Freija approaches Ian, the dive marshal, to ask what the plan was. '*Go for a dive*' was the unexpected response - a gentle reminder that sports divers are capable of planning their own dives! Leigh is diving with Matt and Steve, and while the others are having fun in the water, Ian and I are marshalling. I wonder whether it's possible to sneak up on a swimming duck from below and poke its bum and what would happen if you do. Ian wonders whether the ducks enjoy the jacuzzi created by the divers' exhaust bubbles- Hmm?

Suddenly, our attention is deviated from a more detailed line of questioning by the arrival at the surface of Matt's diminutive DSMB. It is far beyond the Stanegarh, and moving further away - not what was given to us as the plan! '*Can't be Matt*, comments Ian, '*they're going the wrong way!*'. But it was and they were - Ian muttered something about remedial training in the use of reciprocal bearings! Once the others had come out, Ian and I are in...



Responsible
marshalling!

Dive 1:

- Where: Stanegarth
- Depth: approximately 22 m
- Visibility: at least 10 m

We are finning over to the shot above the Stanegarth: the largest inland shipwreck according to Ian. We descend to 20 m in one go. The visibility is great. I'm looking down at the shot line disappearing into the depth and at another group of divers descending below us. It's almost like parachuting and I feel exhilarated. We get to the Stanegarth and it's amazing: we can see the whole tug from one end to the other. We dive around the wreck and descend to the propeller. I look up and get a view along the entire tug with swarms of divers silhouetted against a bright sky above. I desperately want a camera. We dive into what I guess is the hold. Then, we enter the wheelhouse and look through the windows into the dark waters of the cove. Eventually, we leave the Stanegarth behind and fin across to have a quick look at the bus. We start our ascend on the quarry wall. Ian signals me to deploy my DSMB. I push the lever down too hard, the reel gets stuck and I have to let go. Ian gives me his DSMB, I have another go and this time it works. Finally, we have a look at the Nautilus, a small submarine perched on a ledge at about 6 m. I immensely enjoy having something to look at for our safety stop rather than being stuck in mid-water hypnotized by a dive computer. We surface and I feel totally happy. What a lovely dive.

Lunchtime! Divers are feeding chips to the ducks. Somebody is teasing, holding a chip out, way up high. However, Stoney Duck leaps up and grabs the chip – like a crocodile with feathers. As soon as I unpack my lunch, Stoney Duck comes across. Matt asks me for some of my sandwich: *'It's not for me. I only want to feed the duck'*, he says. How sweet! I can't refuse.

For the second round of dives, Leigh is dive marshalling the first two groups. Freija and Andy and Steve and Matt are going in again. It transpired that during the morning dive, Steve had dropped his wetnotes. Now, they should be recognisable from the variety of innovative (and invariably rude) pre-written messages available on the sheets, as well as a page scribbled with: *'I think we're going the wrong way'*, or words to that effect! This was a perfect opportunity to practise the circular search technique, and so Matt and Steve prepared the line! After an hour of swirling around in circles in the silt, they re-emerged empty handed, only to find that the aforementioned wet-notes had been handed into the shop as lost property, a few minutes before they had gone in. Red faces all around!

I had a look at the dive shop and watched the progress of our cylinders at the compressor shed. Only about 50 in front of us now. For the second dive, Leigh is joining Ian and I. It's getting late - Stoney closes at 4 pm - and Ian drives us on to get into the water before they stop us from doing so. *'Nothing much they can do once we're down'*, Ian says. I have this vision of tired Stoney staff, wanting to go home to their dinners, throwing a few sticks of TNT into the cove. Dynamite fishing divers...that'll teach them the time to get out! But of course they don't do that sort of thing.



Getting ready.

Dive 2:

- Where: Gradual descent from the slipway into the murk
- Depth: approximately 21 m
- Visibility: about 3-4 m at most

For the second dive, my drill is to tug a SMB. We descend gradually from the slipway, look first at the Viscount aircraft cockpit and then descend further and take a turn towards the Wessex helicopter. The viz has greatly deteriorated by now and I'm amazed how Ian finds his way. Originally, he suggested I should plan and lead the dive. Instead, I preferred to tick the SMB drill off my SD list and now I'm really glad I did. If I had led the second dive, we probably would have surfaced in Timbuktu. We ascend on the quarry wall, I play with a small lobster-like thing and we get to the Nautilus again. Next to it is what I take for an old quarry building, but I think it was actually the archways under Capt. Nemo's pub. Then, we surface.



Freija and Andy going down!

We pack up all the stuff into our cars. Ian, Matt and Leigh are planning on a pub meal somewhere nearby. '*Otherwise*', Ian says, desperately trying to look pathetic, '*it's the sofa, a microwave dinner and the telly for me*'... awww. I drive home to a steaming hot lamb curry, Freija is heading for a barbeque with friends and Andy, well, I have no idea what he was up to for the rest of the day.

Maybe some of you guys, having done a lot more challenging diving, will chuckle at this, but I really enjoyed the day at Stoney and I'm looking forward to getting back there some time. Even if I have to get up at 6am on a Saturday.

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