



**Stoney Cove
May 13
2006**

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Organised by Matt Watson and Ian Gregory

Trip report by Rowena Crawford (and craftily edited by Ian Gregory)

The line-up:

- Ian Gregory
- James Donnelly
- Matt Watson
- Jon Knight
- Rowena Crawford
- Jen Sambrook
- Karin Müller
- Jo Belfield
- Claire Kelly

The day started with the inevitable CUUEG kit faff. We had sorted out all the kit the night before with the intention of being able to just turn up in the morning, chuck it in the cars and go. Of course this didn't happen - we packed up all the cars and then decided to leave one behind,¹ so we had to unpack it and load all the stuff into the other unsuspecting vehicles. We eventually set off, suspension groaning, only 20 mins behind schedule. Matt had furnished us with beautiful directions from the AA, but these were quickly dispensed with in favour of Karin's scrawled flow diagram of instructions. To her credit they did get us to Stoney flawlessly and not in bad time either (it's 88 miles - about an hour and a half from Cambridge, given a clear run).

Everyone had warned us that we'd arrive so late at Stoney that we'd have to park up in the top car park and lug all our kit miles to the water. They were right in that we were in the 'top' car park, but it wasn't quite what I expected. The 'miles' turned out to be only about 300 m and the huge hill was only about 10 m high! Hardly the end of the world.² We assembled our kit in the car park and then just walked it down to a spot we had commandeered near the water. This was my first time at Stoney Cove and I was surprised how nice it is to look at. It's surprisingly big, with steep cliffs on the other side and lots of water (which I guess kind of helps for diving). We didn't hang around much. Kitted up and went diving...³

Dive 1

Had a 200 m surface swim (ugh) but Ian allowed me a nice relaxing bob around the surface to recover. Descent was down a shot line, watching the bubbles of divers in the murk below us. Visibility was ok, probably about 5 m, but I still nearly landed on the Stanegarth before I noticed it. I'm obviously really unobservant, how could anyone not notice an 18 m tug boat? Went over the back⁴ and had a look round its big propeller, and then swam along the side with Ian pointing out fish with his torch. Went in the wheelhouse and pretended to drive and then went and explored inside (and outside) the rest of the tug. Found a Bob Marley doll outside the wheelhouse. I am not entirely sure what that was doing there.⁵ Left the Stanegarth and finned across to the cliff. Ascended up it looking at the fish (which Ian seemed to be trying to catch...) and then went and had a look round under the pub where there was a distinct absence of whatever Ian was looking for in secluded corners.⁶ Had a quick look around the Nautilus (a mini 10 m submarine) and then ascended.

Don't think anyone else had as good a dive as I had. James and Matt had a good dive but headed for the Stanegarth underwater following a bearing and managed to completely miss it. (How could anyone not notice an 18 m tugboat?!) They even went through 'the murky cloud that had divers coming out of it' and still didn't find it. Ah well, we'll all just have to go back. Karin and Claire managed to find the Stanegarth (like Ian and I they employed the neat trick of using the provided shotline), but had difficulty losing it. Despite Karin's best attempts to navigate away they always ended back where they started and eventually finished the dive ascending back up the shotline. (I think she just really liked the boat!) I'm not sure what Jen and Joanna got up to but they came back again after the dive so it can't have been too bad. *"Jo and Jen started their dive on the effervescent Stanegarth - thanks to two divers inside - coincidentally, Ian and Ro, and then expertly navigated to the helicopter on their way back" (added by Jen).*

We took our cylinders to be filled and then had a rather gourmet lunch provided by Matt. Having been promised the 'usual CUUEG goodies' we were actually provided with pitta bread, real cheese, meat, lettuce, tomatoes and quiche! A veritable feast! Unfortunately the conversation

wasn't quite so pleasant and generally involved whether you could get under a duck and either pull it underwater by its legs (Ian!) or stick a dive knife in it (Jon!). James also gave Matt and I a line laying demonstration in the car park which basically involved trying up random pieces of fence and getting in people's way - always good fun.

Dive 2

Eventually managed to collect a full cylinder, although to be fair to the compressor shed it did actually have 232 bar in it – the first time that's ever happened. Went in for my second dive with James and Matt. Descended and got as far as under the pub when Matt kindly informed us that he had forgotten his dive timer. A prime opportunity for use of the 'I'm a right tit, left tit behind' signal was alas wasted with Matt opting for the more conventional 'I'm a d**khead' signal. Anyway the message was successfully conveyed and we ascended and spent several minutes trying to inconspicuously signal our surface cover to come over and find out what we wanted. That's the trouble with crowded dive sites - being recognised. Clearly everyone should have a bright yellow drysuit. (Actually no, because then if everyone had one it wouldn't be obvious anymore. Hmm. Never mind). Eventually Muppet had his timer brought over to him and we descended again. Played with line laying which was actually quite good fun, even if we were only about 1.5 m deep at times. Tied up rocks and poles, but unfortunately James stayed out of the way so our wonderful plan of trying down an instructor was foiled. Then dropped off to 9 m so I could launch a blob (we'll ignore what happened in between leaving for 9 m and launching the blob) and then ascended, watching fish on the deco stop with Matt doing a perfect mid water hover (grrrrr).

Ian and Jon were just going in for Jon's 'lead a novice' dive when we got out. Once they were safely under (with Ian looking very nervous) we trogged up to the cars and put all the kit away. They were out of the water by the time we returned. Jon seemed to have survived the dive relatively unscathed despite Ian's appalling buoyancy, mask flooding, fin dropping, going off in the wrong direction and general stressing. Oh and being accosted by Stoney staff in a RIB on return to the surface (they were underwater after closing time!)⁷. After packing up the rest of the kit and eating numerous coconut macaroons, we drove into Stoney Stanton to the local pub (The Bell Inn) - which all 3 cars managed to drive past without noticing.⁸ We chilled out with beer/coke and then warmed up with curry from the Indian restaurant secreted out the back. All in all a brilliant day - great diving, brilliant company and good food at the end. What more could you want?⁹

¹ The idea was to save petrol money (as well as the environment) by not taking more cars than we needed!

² Recent statistical analysis shows a definite positive correlation between the people that get there at 4am to park at the bottom car park, and the people that dive with twenty-eight cylinders each of poshgasee-ox decompression whatjamadoodlyflips attached to them.

³ Now there's a first!

⁴ For those of you unfamiliar with such technical terms, this is the stern end.

⁵ Neither is Bob Marley.

⁶ Freshwater Crayfish.

⁷ Ian continued to be the 'novice' during the subsequent exchange - it seemed so much easier than explaining the drill, even if it meant that Jon took the blame!

⁸ Ian saw the pub, and then missed the turning for the car park. Both cars dutifully followed him past!

⁹ A bigger boat!