



Porthkerris 24th March - 1st April 2007

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Organised by: John Kendall and Ian Gregory

Trip Report by: Ro Crawford

Video Montage by: Steve Clark <http://video.google.co.uk/videoplay?docid=1552171427649425238&hl=en-GB>

The Important Info:

Shore diving at Porthkerris Divers <http://www.porthkerris.com/index.htm>

Air: just buy it from the above, even if you may have your own compressor...

Accommodation: Franchis Holidays Caravan Site

The line-up:

Trainees:

1. Liz Inns
2. Jon Nobes
3. Grant Jackson
4. Sal Hogg
5. Joanna Argasinska
6. Matt Forrest
7. Will McLauren
8. Kelly Neaves
9. Michael Thorne
10. Ulrich Kerzel
11. Chris Coomber
12. Emily Argyle

Instructors:

1. Ian Gregory
2. John Kendall
3. David Martin
4. Matt Worsley
5. Steve Clark

Randomers:

1. Rachael MacDonald
2. Jen Sambrook
3. Louisa Whitlock
4. Matt Watson
5. Jon Knight
6. Edvin Deadman
7. Rowena Crawford

Day -1: Friday 23rd March

We all met at the kitstore with our kit ready to load the van, except that when we had completely emptied the kitstore onto the ground outside David called to let us know he hadn't left work yet so the van was still in London. D'oh! A few stalwartly souls settled down in the kitstore with some take away pizzas and chocolate cookies to keep moral up. Finally our knight in shining armour (or at least David in a white Citroën van) arrived, and the van was packed without too much ado (although there was one unfortunate jar of salsa dip that didn't quite make it safely on board). We then slouched off back to our various homes to get what was left of a good night's sleep.

Day 0: Saturday 24th March

Meeting bright and early at the kit store almost worked and the 'Fun Bus' and 'Happy Van' set off not too late on the long trol to Cornwall. About 7 hours later we finally neared our destination, and after a brief stop at Tesco in Truro to stock up on supplies we arrived at the campsite. To save time on proper diving days we started the kitfaff instantly: loaning out undersuits (the ones ordered for the trainees were still somewhere between us and Poland), sizing up backplates and distributing fins. We then cooked, ate, had a quick briefing about the week ahead and then went to bed to rest up for the excitement of the coming week.

Day 1: Sunday 25th March

We got up excited about the first day of diving and headed over to Porthkerris beach. Unfortunately there was a fair amount of wind and the sea was a little rough – not drastically but conditions weren't great for a first open water dive. We played Frisbee on the beach and watched a seal that was surfing in the waves and giving us curious looks while the powers-that-be debated what to do. After some discussion it was decided we would try the other side of the Lizard peninsula so we hopped back into the bus/van/cars and set off again. The cars zoomed off

ahead and flagged us down into a suitable looking site called Poldu cove. We unloaded and began the faff...



Porthkerris

Faff in Poldu Cove car park

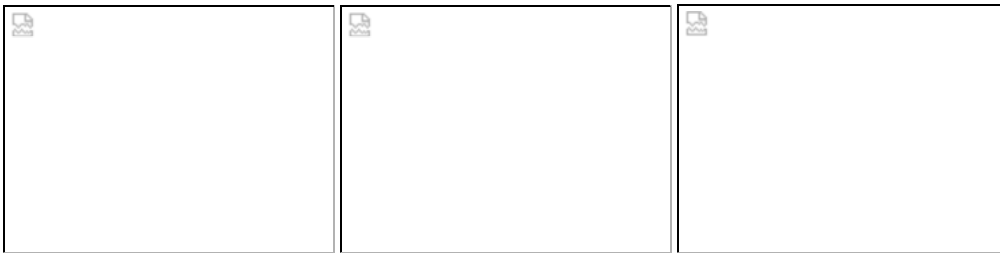
Long walk back from the sea

Poldhucove isn't an amazing dive site (I'm being polite - it's actually pretty rubbish) but at least it gave us all a chance to get in the water. Matt Watson and I managed an hour long dive and found 5.9m, although it can be summed up in 6 words: swash, rocks, swash, sand, more swash. It was still good fun but only made interesting by our underwater antics (lightsaber fights with kelp stalks and the like). We discovered upon surfacing that the beach is actually a surfers' beach (blobs com in handy in these instances!) and so almost by definition not a good shore diving location.

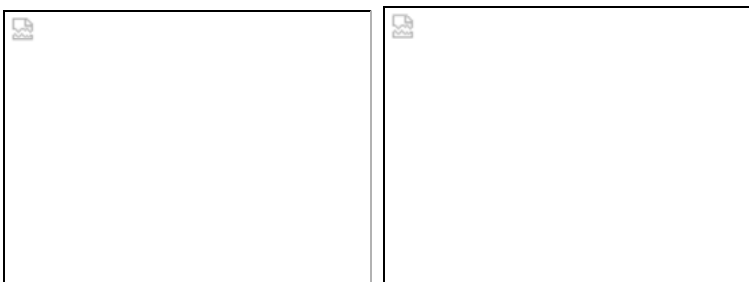
After such a late start it was time to head home after everyone had had a dive. We packed all the sand covered kit away and set off, with the van going via Porthkerris to drop off the cylinders for filling. Back in the caravans we ate, talked and generally chilled out.

Day 2: Monday 26th March

The van left bright and early to go to Porthkerris and collect the cylinders. Porthkerris beach was still not really appropriate for our diving so whilst the instructors' nitrox was being blended we discussed some alternative dive sites with the Porthkerris people. JK drove off to rouse the troops while the Van drove straight across to the other side of the Lizard. Our dive site for the day was Gunwalloe beach which despite a rather off putting notice looked fantastic. So much so that one bloke there seemed to be trying to steal the beach using a tractor!



The diving here was better than at Poldhu, and with our earlier start we managed 2 dives each. The max depth was around 7m (CAUTION: DEEP WATER – my ar\$e!) but there were loads of starfish, anemones and crabs to look at.

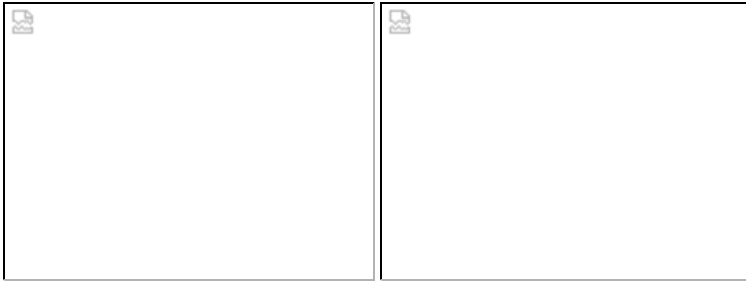


It turned out to be quite a long day, but the sunset as we were leaving the beach was amazing and made lugging the kit up the steep slope from the beach totally worthwhile.

Back at the caravan park we ate food and then all crowded into one caravan to watch Top Gun. Scarily enough Top Gun lasts about the same length of time as the average instructor care-bare meeting!

Day 3: Tuesday 27th March

Wahoo – our first day of diving actually at Porthkerris! We arrived earlier to get the most out of the day (and also to make sure the Bristol University Club hadn't completely taken over the car park before we arrived).



The visibility was a bit rubbish after the previous few days of dodgy weather (Edvin and I took JK for a dive and managed to lose him completely). I found a crème egg underwater and showed it to David with great excitement, who told me “You might want to be quiet about that... we think they're Bristol's”. Famous last words eh?

We had planned to go to a pub quiz in Gweek in the evening but the full day of diving meant we were running to late for this. Instead we called the 'local' pizza place and ordered 10 take away pizzas. They called us back 3 times to check we were serious. Apparently there's something suspicious about a Mr Deadman ordering 10 pizzas to be delivered to a caravan park and asking to pay by cheque! JK improvised a pub quiz (or stole it from some internet site anyway) which was far too difficult and cultural to be answerable by any of us (except Louisa who seemed to know a disturbing number of answers :-s).

The evening then descended into drunken twister, snorkel drinking competitions and whatever else I can't remember. Ian hit his head on the ceiling, Edvin had an appalling trouser incident and whoever said “I can't believe we trust our lives to these people” summed it up perfectly.



Pizza

*Da Bad Boy n his B*tches Hmm...*

Day 4: Wednesday 28th March

Despite the frivolities of the night before we were all up and raring to go in the morning. There were minor issues in Caravan 4 where Louisa somehow managed to snap a tap off, but we managed to stem the spurting water long enough to contact the caravan people and leave this in their capable hands.

It was a brilliantly sunny day so everyone was in pretty good spirits. I for one had a fantastic day's diving. The visibility was significantly better – a good few meters. Louisa and I did 2 dives together. We managed to find the gravel area known as the 'fish bowl' and spent our dives finning around humming the Top Gun anthem and admiring the many big wrasse, crabs and starfish we came across.

In the evening we stayed on the beach for the instructors and some of the SDs to do a night dive. Matt and Steve got to play with their portable suns (big mumma toches!) which light up the entire reef an erie green colour even for the people on the surface. I did a night dive with Jon Knight which was pretty awesome. It's strangely not that different to diving normally (I'm used to not being able to see anything because of rubbish vis), although everything is black instead of green and the stuff you can see is in full colour. It turns out crabs do have red eyes, sea urchins are purple, although gobis are just gobi coloured. The only drawback of the dive was that Jon managed to lose a club compass. After the dive we went and joined in the BBQ which was expertly cooked by Matt Forrest and extremely welcome as it was now late and night diving can be chilly.

The instructors had a short care-bear meeting on the beach and then we all finally got back to the caravans.



Day 5: Thursday 29th March

More diving at Porthkerris. I found a pipe fish. Jon found the club compass he had lost last night on the night dive. Lucky b***ard.



In the evening we celebrated Rachael's birthday with cake and a crazy hat party. Nothing wildly untoward happened. I think everyone was a bit tired.

Day 6: Friday 30th March

More diving at Porthkerris. Most people were playing with Bob (the rescue manakin) today. Apparently there was a cuttlefish making friends with Bob so a few buddy pairs got to see it. Lucky.

My first dive I went exploring the reef with Jon Knight, going through any gully and swim through we could find. We went in the little bowl shaped cave thing which had turned into crème egg city! We didn't collect any though – it wasn't as exciting when they're everywhere and they don't taste as nice salty anyway. And we didn't see the cuttlefish.

Day 7: Saturday 31st March

Today was destined to go wrong as soon as we left the campsite. We were just pulling out when David realised he had left his DIR coffee mug behind. Disaster! The look of agony on his face as he tried to decide whether to go back for it was quite something. He decided not to and Matt and I sitting with him in the van just knew that today was doomed...

When we arrived at Porthkerris the weather had picked up again. The first buddy pair Ian and Matt Forrest managed to get in the water, but by the time Joanna was trying to get in the waves were getting big and David did some quite spectacular sideways rolls up the beach trying to get back to help her in. They eventually gave up and David canned the diving for the rest of the day (after Ian and Matt were safely up of course).

Instead we spent the day taking photos of people modelling the Protac drysuits, washing kit and repacking the van (David's favourite part of the whole trip).



A nice pose from Mr Forrest ;-)

When we had (finally!) finished washing and packing we headed back to the caravans. We then washed ourselves and headed downtown (well down the road at least) to the Wheel Inn. We surprisingly managed to stay reasonably civilised for the duration of the meal and get back to the caravans without any significant road kill. The only casualty was my crème egg Easter egg which managed to get left behind in a phone box. We retired to David's caravan for the after party which significantly improved half way through with the return of my Easter egg which was rescued by Ian.

The 'mermaid egg' collection competition had been altered this year, with crème eggs being the actual mermaid eggs we were meant to collect, and the golf balls being cunning decoys. Unfortunately people seemed to consider collecting Bristol's crème eggs bad form and so tended not to collect any they found, rendering the competition a bit hopeless (I'm entirely blaming David for this!). Louisa managed to find some way of devising who to give prizes to though, whether or not this relates to any actual achievement only she must know.

Day 8: Sunday 1st April

What little of the morning there was we spent cleaning the caravans and packing everything else into the van. Jon, Will and Kelly managed to get tickets for Glastonbury and got very excited about it. At some point we left and headed back to Cambridge.

I had a fantastic trip. Porthkerris is a brilliant place to dive, especially when you're not having to concentrate on training (either as an instructor or trainee), so everyone should definitely come back. Bring on next year!