



Swanage Carnage

19-20th July 2008

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Trip organised by M@tt Watson

Trip report by Mark Hallworth

The Divers:

- Rowena Crawford (SD)
- Mark Hallworth (DL)
- Rachael Macdonald (DL)
- Stuart Moore (SD)
- Simon Parsons (DL)
- M@tt Watson (SD)
- Matt Worsley (DL)

The Diving: Divers Down (Swanage) <http://www.diversdownswanage.co.uk/>

The Boats: **Swanage Diver and Smooth Hound**

Skipper: Pete Williams and Mike Marsh

Accommodation: Hermitage Guest House, 1 Manor Road, Swanage BH19 2BH (01929 423014)

Friday 18 July.

3:00pm. Kit store: Manage stowage of luggage and baggage.

M@tt, Stuart, Matt and I meet at the kit store. It's very, very simple. There's a pile of stuff and two cars.....I think we all know how this should work. Amongst other things, we have a large bag containing a full set of spare kit. M@tt has carefully put his own backplate in the spare kit bag so it won't be forgotten. The spare kit bag is placed right in the doorway of the store so there's no possible chance of it being left behind.

4:00pm. M25/M3: A blockage and a stoppage on the voyage to Swanage.

After a final double check that we've packed absolutely everything, M@tt and I set off. Matt and Stuart wait for Rachael, and then decide that trying to get round London on a Friday afternoon is not really much of a challenge, and ought to be spiced up with a dash across Cambridge at rush hour to pick up some stages. Meanwhile, M@tt and I are running into the inevitable queues on the M25, and are further delayed by a long tailback on the M3 caused by some muppet's boat falling over. We idle away a pleasant 5 hours and arrive in Swanage at gone 9pm. Checking in at the Hermitage Guest House took a full minute, and then it was straight off to the Red Lion. Stuart, Rachael and Matt duly arrived at about 11:30pm, which gave me and M@tt far too long in the pub without grown-up supervision, especially given the availability of 8% cider. By the time Ro and Simon eventually joined us, err...actually, I don't remember anything else....

Saturday 19 July.

8:30pm. Breakfast: A shortage of porridge but we all got a sausage.

Having parked all the cars on the pier at 7:30am and put the twins in for filling when the shop opened at 8:15am, it was back to the B+B for the +B bit. Breakfast included fried bread, which puts the Hermitage right up there in the pantheon of 5-star accommodation for £26pppn in my book. Given our ruthless efficiency in kitting up though, it was clear that we soon had to head off for the 10 min walk down to the pier.

9:30pm. Kit-up: Assemblage by the moorage on the pierage.

As we started to get our kit together, it became increasingly apparent that we were missing something. Something rather colossal, shaped

not unlike a spare kit bag, and quite capable of containing M@tt's backplate. Somehow it had gone astray with a worryingly valuable amount of gear. The immediate predicament, however, was that M@tt had nothing to strap his twins to. With Swanage Diver straining at her mooring to be underway in half an hour, an inspired solution was required fast if M@tt was going to get a dive. What we needed was a "Stuart-volunteering-to-give-M@tt-his-own-backplate-and-dive-a-hired-BC" type of plan, which we somehow managed to effect with remarkable proficiency. Come 11am, we were all aboard, kitted out and ready to rock. This selfless, heroic act of kindness by Stuart transpired to be just the start of his weekend kit realignment program...

Dive 1: (1145hrs) The Kyarra

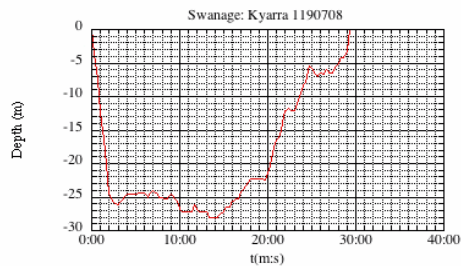
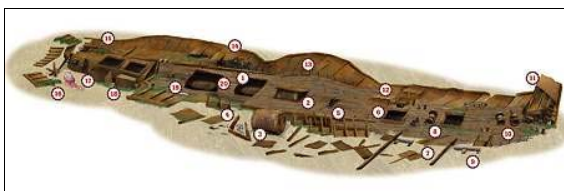
Buddy pair	Max depth	Duration
Mark/M@tt/Stuart	28.0m	29mins
Rowena/Simon	28.8m	30mins
Rachael/Matt	29.0m	40mins

The Kyarra was a 6900 tonne steamship which was being used as a hospital ship when she was torpedoed off Durlston Head in 1918. She lies in 30m.



On board Swanage Diver en route to the Kyarra.

Now I was under the impression that we were having a "who can spot the most of those elusive tompot blennies" competition, and was delighted to race into an early 2-nil lead by bagging a brace as soon as we left the shot. My buddies, however, were utterly underwhelmed, which was perhaps understandable when I realised that the whole wreck was crawling with the stupid bobble-capped critters. Undeterred, I pressed on and we began a random meander through and around a big jumble of plates and stuff. M@tt spotted the tail of a monster conger, but we never got to see its head, which could not have been smaller than a camel's. All in all it was a great dive, but there was a fair old swell on the surface which made the ascent a bit bouncy. So much so, in fact, that back on board the "rib-that-thinks-it's-a-hardboat", I decided that I didn't want my fried bread after all.



Divernet Wreck Tour 47 of the Kyarra and my dive profile on a HW Spring slack.

1:000pm. Lunch: A forage in the village for a beverage.

Back at the pier, we put the cylinders in for filling with Nitrox flavour, and since we weren't heading out again until 5pm, there was plenty time enough for some fish and chippage in town followed by general snoozery on the pier.

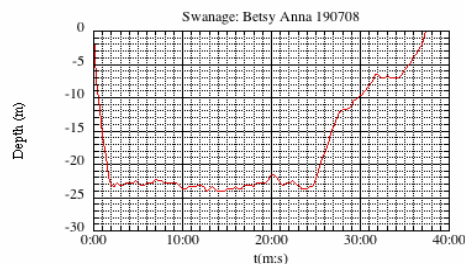
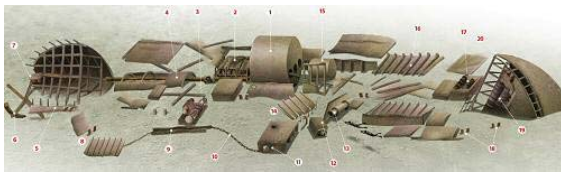


Comfy!

Dive 2: (1806hrs) The Betsy Anna

Buddy pair	Max depth	Duration
Mark/M@t/Stuart	24.0m	37mins
Rowena/Simon	24.0m	40mins
Rachael/Matt	24.0m	45mins

We steamed due west out of Swanage for about 9.5km, and in half an hour were on top of the Betsy Anna - an 880 tonne coaster that came to grief on Prawle Point in 1926, and sank in Poole bay while being towed to Cowes. After a couple of attempts to fix the shot, we were soon descending onto the large boiler, but an adjacent smaller donkey boiler (just why would anyone want to boil a donkey?) held more interest by hosting three monster congers in separate fire-holes. M@t managed to flush out a tetchy one-armed lobster which obviously hadn't mastered the whole swimming backwards and finding cover thing. We managed a quick loop of the section aft of the boilers before it was time to ascend. I did, in all honesty, believe I'd put enough gas in my blob before I released it, but its reluctant rise and truculent, frankly petty defiance of Boyle's Law, meant that it surfaced shamefacedly flaccid and clearly delighted the skipper with its towering presence above the choppy surface glare.



Wreck tour of the Betsy Anna and my profile on a LW Spring slack

8:30pm. The Red Lion: Average.

Meal out .

Sunday 20 July.

8:30pm. Breakfast: Savage language in the Hermitage.

By an impressive feat of timing we managed to arrive at the pier just too late to get parking spaces, so it was top car park for us, at the entirely reasonable rate of £8 a car for the day. Back at the house, we at least entertained our fellow B+B guests with some lighthearted breakfast banter on the hideous intricacies of capital punishment and the gruesome effects of electrocution on large quadrupeds.

9:30pm. Kit-up: Salvage of the damage to the footage.

The weekend was beginning to take its toll on equipment and personnel. Simon was feeling rubbish and had already decided to bin the dives rather than face a long day aboard Smooth Hound. As the rest of us began to assemble our sets, Stuart was suddenly alarmed to discover a pinhole leak in the foot of his drysuit, Unfortunately, the pin that made the hole was evidently 7" wide, and had all but severed the sole right off. Unbowed, Stuart engaged his by now well-honed plan B-go-hire-it mode, and reappeared minutes later sporting a rather snazzy DiversDown wetsuit, thus completing the full-on nostalgia trip with his BC back to training days. After a brief symposium on weightbelt/buoyancy theory, it was all systems go again for launch. I was most impressed, and come 11am we were casting off on board Smooth Hound bound for.....

Dive 3: (1232hrs) The Aeolian Sky: a rummage through the tonnage of the wreckage.

Buddy pair	Max depth	Duration
Mark/Matt	29.2m	41mins

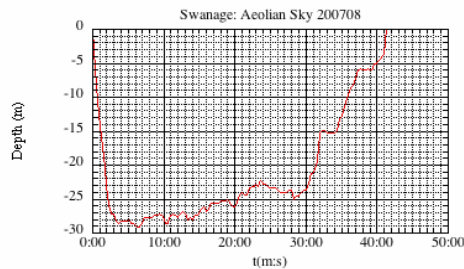
Rowena/M@tt 29.0m 40mins
Rachael/Stuart 28.0m 25mins

The Aeolian Sky is huuuge. It was a proper 16000 ton Greek freighter that sailed majestically across the seas until it rammed majestically into a German motor vessel and ultimately sank while under tow towards Portland in high seas, 18km SW of Swanage.



Smooth Hound and it's happy divers.

The trip out to the Sky took about 45 minutes, but apart from being a bit lumpy off St. Alban's Head, the sea state was much calmer than the day before. On site, the wreck was quickly spotted just aft of the stern superstructure, and once the tide had slackened off we began a long descent to the tie-in. 25 mins bottom time was never going to be enough to do this wreck justice, but Matt and I were well impressed with the little bit we saw.



Divernet Wreck Tour 27 of the Aeolian Sky and my dive profile on a HW Spring slack.

1:30pm. Pack-up: Coverage of mileage back to Cambridge.

Once back on shore, the prospect of heading off out again for a shallow drift in ever-deteriorating drysuits was rapidly losing its appeal when held against the alternative prospect of getting home early, so the second dive was canned by unanimous consent. Matt dropped Stuart off at Wareham station before the long trek back up north to Manchester. Simon was dropping Ro off en route, leaving M@tt, Rachael and myself as the only ones returning to Cambridge. Another delightful 5 hours later, we were safely back in the arms of Panton, reminiscing on what had been a fantastic weekend, and a beacon of efficiency and dive management for other trip organisers. Although we had contrived to lose an entire kit bag full of expensive stuff, an almost identical one was magically waiting for us on the floor of the kit store when we returned.