



**Plymouth**

**11-13th April 2009**

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**Trip organised by John Kendall**

**Trip report by Wiki Power**

### **The Divers**

- [John Kendall](#)
- Rachael Macdonald
- Matt Worsley
- Steve Clark
- Christian Ashby

### **The non-diving contingent**

- Kat Clark
  - Beth Clark (at 16 mo old, not quite ready to be diving!)
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### **The Dive Centre**

Aquanauts - <http://www.aquanauts.co.uk/>

### **Accommodation**

Ashgrove Hotel (which is actually a Bed and Breakfast - go figure!) - <http://www.ashgrovehotel-plymouth.co.uk/>

Cost was quite reasonable at £55 per room per night, and the rooms are very nice - they have one single and one double in most rooms, so that they can sell them as singles, twins or doubles. En Suite in all rooms, and very good sized. You get a key to the building so there's no need to worry about timings. Checkout is at 10am on the last morning, and arrival times can be negotiated (we arrived at 3pm and the owner was around).

Parking near the B&B requires a permit between 10am and 6pm (I think, though the signs don't specify a time; I wouldn't chance it!), which the owner will sell you for £6 per day.

Breakfast was OK - plenty of cereals, toast, fruit, yoghurts and a full English to order, but the owner does appear to only be able to do one thing at a time, which over a busy bank holiday proved to be quite a slow way of doing things!

### **Saturday**

We arrived on the Saturday at the dive centre all being a little frazzled from the Porthkerris trip that ended the night before, but made it (in John's time zone at least) sufficiently on time to make it to the boat, with - surprisingly for the amount we had to rush - all of our kit.

#### **Dive 1 - [Mewstone Ridges](#)**

- John/ Christian - Max depth 16.4 m, 33 mins
- Rachael / Steve / Matt - Max depth 23.6 m, 36 mins

Not far from the Mewstone rock, this site is a series of overlapping rock formations, with some very interesting crevices, in which we found various crabs for John to bother (a past time of his it seems), anemone, sea cucumbers (disgusting things!) and shoals of fish. As a first dive of the weekend, it was quite challenging; the swell, water current meant the shot line was at quite an angle, and some fairly vigorous swimming had to be done to keep alongside it (and as Christian found out - pulling on the shot means an unhappy skipper. He got away with it though as he was the 'baby diver' on the boat...).

## Dive 2 - [Glen Strathallen](#)

- John / Christian - Max depth 14.5 m, 36 mins
- Rachael / Steve / Matt - Max depth 13.3 m, 17 mins

After a very short and abuse-filled lunch (we very quickly got used to Dougie's ways, so the abuse wasn't that bad!), we headed to the Glen Strathallen, to be dropped directly by the massive boiler of the old ship, which is the main piece of the wreck which is still vaguely in one piece. We didn't meet the large Conga Eel that is reported to live in the boiler, but had a great time looking around at the various bits of rusty iron, etc that once made up this historically interesting ship, and watching the large variety of wrasse, bib, and other fish swimming around us.

Once we got back to the shot line, John navigated us back to the shot line in order to try an ascent with a better reference point, and he dragged the line over to a point clear of the wreck, then started to put his torch away, etc. When he looked up again, the shot was gone, and Christian nearly lost his reg due to laughing too hard - what John had failed to notice was the shot line being pulled up as he was faffing with his kit; so much for the shot ascent plan; a DSMB deployment sufficed anyway.

The others' dive was cut short. About 10 minutes into the dive Steve pointed at his 2nd stage and gave the well-known "it's dodgy" sign. Matt couldn't tell anything wrong with the gas or the reg and so out came the wetnotes in which Steve quickly described that his gas tasted funny. We immediately thumbed the dive and Rachael launched a DSMB whilst Matt donated gas to Steve for the ascent. The gas did indeed smell of something, which, it transpired could be residual degreasing agent from the last O2 clean. We drained the set on the surface and there were no more problems with the 32% fill the next day.

Once the dives were over (in a very short time due to the no-dawdling attitude of the skipper) we went back and introduced ourselves to the B&B owner - a couple of hours earlier than planned, but she was in and quite happy to deal with us all. Showered and cleaned up, and hit the town for a jug of Sangria washed down with some local fish and chips, then further cocktails - the Mojitos were excellent. Thinking it felt like midnight, we all collapsed to sleep at a very early hour.

## Sunday

The next day dawned bright and clear, and after a bit of faffing with the van to deliver more cylinders for Christian, went straight down to the dockyard and impressed the skipper by being almost on time. Another full boat today with a few new faces.

## Dive 1 - [HMS Scylla](#)

- John / Christian - Max depth 19.5 m, 41 mins
- Rachael / Steve / Matt - Max depth 21.6 m, 41 mins

The next morning dawned as calm as a millpond, and went to one of the more famous recent wrecks in this part of the world. Unfortunately, despite (or perhaps because of) being given a very expensive torch to not break (Rachael's canister torch), Christian decided to bounce up and down the whole dive; having never quite got into a diving mood in the morning - the max depth of 19.5 m was mainly due to him falling off the edge of the deck for about 2 mins (the deck was at about 15 m) - careless.

Features to note included the 5 mortar tubes on the fore and aft decks used to make the explosion look more impressive when she was sunk, and the Exocet missile launchers on the deck surface. Due to his buoyancy problems, Christian decided not to go into the bridge and play captain, but we could still clearly see the radar panel, etc still well intact.

## Dive 2 - [James Egan Layne](#)

- John / Christian - Max depth 16.4 m, 32 mins
- Rachael / Steve / Matt - 18.7 m, 41 mins

After a very relaxing - but too short - lunch, we went back in over the wreck of the James Egan Layne - a WW II cargo ship. This wreck is renowned for the contents of the holds, and certainly didn't disappoint any of us, and by this point Christian had sorted out his buoyancy (Putting much less gas in his drysuit made things much easier...) and managed to get inside the hold with no problems - it's a lovely open wreck due to its age, so this posed little danger to baby divers! John's underwater description of the anchor winch left something to be desired (What are you calling me John? How rude!)...

Sunday evening consisted of a quick pint in a pub on The Hoe, then dinner at the 'Thai Palace' - literally just around the corner from the B&B, which surprised us all by some exquisitely well cooked and presented food, not cheap, but well worth the money, and somewhere we'd all go back to.

## Monday

## Dive 1 - [Glen Strathallen](#)

- John / Christian - Max depth 17.9 m, 29 mins
- Rachael / Steve / Matt - Max depth 17.7 m, 36 mins

Due to the rather nasty surface conditions (leading to some green divers; none of whom had taken seasickness pills today - first two days, everyone took them religiously, and the sea was as flat as a mirror - typical), Dougie decided to go to the Glen Strathallen instead of his original plan, which proved to be a really nice dive. The team of three managed a full 36 minutes due to good tasting air.

This time Christian and John achieved a trip back to the shot to do the ascent, but we put the blob up at 6m anyway due to the poor surface conditions. Christian managed a very controlled ascent; stopping reasonably well at both 6 and 3 m.

## Monday Dive 2 - [Le Poulmic](#)

- John / Christian - Max depth 18.2 m, 31 mins
- Rachael / Matt - Max depth 17.7 m, 43 mins

After hiding behind the breakwater for lunch with some ill feeling divers, we emerged (fully kitted up to avoid doing so in a bouncy boat) to find slightly better (but still not very nice) surface conditions on the last dive of the weekend. Steve decided he didn't feel up to do the dive, so Matt and Rachael teamed up leaving Steve to help us with kit as we went off and returned to the boat; which was very useful given the swell.

Once we got down to depth, we mooched around the wreck site for a while, saw the winch, which is about the only remaining complete feature of the wreck outside of the skeletal remains of the ship's body.

We didn't go very far once at the sea floor, as there was a fantastic shoal of bib to look at - must have been 200 or so; all five of us were watching them for quite a while.

Monday was a bit windier, and the surface conditions not pleasant as mentioned in the dive logs, but people recovered enough to pack up their kit in good time, and so we decided to go into town for fish and chips before going our separate ways. Clearly Matt didn't have enough diving, as he managed to slip off the marina wall into the drink, narrowly missing the boat which was moored up - about 2m down; after all of us checking he was OK, we proceeded to laugh, then help him back onto the wall. A somewhat scary moment, but at least the swans enjoyed the free meal.