



## Scottish Lochs

July 2009

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### Trip Summary

A Long and Fyne weekend in the Sea Lochs!

In the past year, CUUEG has had some issues with trips being blown out, and also recently had difficulty with filling big trips. There is also suggestion that some of the more experience divers were becoming 'bored' of the 'usual' dive sites. The trip was therefore designed to fix all three points, as well as take up a long standing offer of a 'northern base' at Iain and Cat's house in Strathblane, just north of Glasgow in South-West Scotland. Diving in the well-sheltered sea lochs meant the chances of being unable to dive due to bad weather were minimised. Shore diving and staying at Iain and Cat's meant that numbers could be flexible - without the requirement to fill a boat and risk a lost deposit. Finally, this was a new site to most CUUEG members (Iain had dived most of the sites at least once, and Ian had dived at Conger Alley once on the way back from Mull, but to everyone else this was new territory)...

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### The Divers:

- Iain Smith (AD)
- Ian Gregory (DL)
- Cat Smith (SD)
- Ro Crawford (SD)
- Georgie Stooke-Vaughan (SD)
- Karin Muller (SD)
- Stuart Moore (SD)
- Maksim Tsytonok (OD)
- Beccy Mant (OD)
- Alexey Bannykh (OD)

### Details

#### The Diving

The essentials of Loch diving are: find a suitable spot to check out, park up in a layby, kit up and walk in! With a couple of exceptions, the entries and exits were very straightforward, and the water was flat calm all weekend. The shore generally slopes away gently - meaning that all the sites are relatively benign and 'pick-your-depth'. Unusually, the seawater in this area (like the Clyde estuary) is characterised by a layer of peaty water for the top few metres, with the visibility improving significantly at depth. In fact, we were lucky, generally enjoying 6-10 metres of vis - despite the darkness - a torch was definitely a good idea. Some dives were so dark at depth it was almost like a moonlit nightdive, but the water clarity in the torchlight was generally very good.

Looking back, this trip is excellent for building confidence in newly qualified divers, and is a good place to let Ocean Divers 'off-the-leash' after a few work-up dives to assess the conditions and re-acclimatise to being underwater. The water darkness (ironically) can be seen as a positive in this respect - divers can experience the darkness, isolation and thrill of the depth, without actually having to go deep! If this sounds a bit too philosophical, then I'll just say that 15 metres definitely felt like 30, and maintaining a healthy respect for deep, dark places can only be a good thing!

#### Filling

We got all our fills from the Argyle Caravan Park on the North West of Loch Fyne [\[1\]](#) who can't do Nitrox or clean Air. Go into the park and follow the roads down towards the loch; the road goes round to the right, and eventually you come to a large car park by the loch. The filling station is the white building on the south side of this car park. Best to warn them you're coming, and if there's no one there look for a list of mobile numbers on the door.

The day after the trip, Iain learned of another filling station ideally situated for returning from Loch Long. Methven Motors does air only, but up to 300bar fills. Apparently the owner is DO of a local club.

Methven Motors Lennox St, Alexandria, G83 0ED

#### Accommodation:

## Day 0: Friday 3rd July 2009

We all left Cambridge within an hour of each other at midday, in order to arrive in Glasgow at a sensible hour. Due to a minor mix up, we ended eating at 2 separate service stations within 10 miles of each other - oops. The route - A1 to Scotch Corner, then across to the M6 - worked well.

## Day 1: Saturday 4th July 2009

### Dive 1: The 'A' Frames, Loch Long

The wreckage of an old demolished pier.

Buddy pair	Max depth	Duration
Iain/Maksim	19.8 m	40 mins
Ian/Alexey	19.4 m	34 mins
Ro/Beccy	19.1 m	34 mins
Stuart/Karin/Georgie	20.6 m	34 mins

### Dive 2: The Caves, Loch Long

As far as we know, no actual caves, but the silliest site access you're likely to find - you part on the opposite side of the road to the Loch on either side of a bridge for a small stream, then clamber down the side and under the bridge to get to the loch. Not one to do after significant rain.

The dive itself was great - heading left (south) found a steep wall between about 10 and 20m (it may go deeper), covered in "Dead Man's Fingers" in white and orange, and a huge cloud of Moon Jellyfish (about 15cm diameter).

The dive was very dark - even more so than "The Caves". Torches were more or less essential.

Buddy pair	Max depth	Duration
Iain/Maksim	20.0 m	35 mins
Ian/Alexey	18.9 m	35 mins
Ro/Beccy	15.8 m	32 mins
Stuart/Karin/Georgie	19.2 m	32 mins

## Day 2: Sunday 5th July 2009

### Dive 1: The Furnace Tearooms, Loch Fyne

A nice big car park for the tearooms, great weather and real toilets made this site stand out. Make sure you park at the North end of the car park - the tea rooms were getting fed up of divers taking the best spots and getting changed in full view of their customers. Keep them happy by buying (very good) cake. It would have been a nice place to buy lunch if we hadn't already brought a packed lunch.

The dive itself is around a long line of boulders - getting in on the eastwards (loch facing) side, going south, then coming back up the other side into a bay that sloped from 8m to 12m where it met the loch. The northern beach for this bay was good for 6m and 3m stops, and covered in tiny hermit crabs, whose reaction to torchlight was quivering and hiding in their shell. Other life included some larger fish, and (probably) a big conger eel hiding amongst the rocks. In the bay there were two traffic cones and an ironing board (with iron).

Buddy pair	Max depth	Duration
Ian/Ro	18.3 m	40 mins
Iain/Alexey	17.7 m	37 mins
Karin/Maksim	20.0 m	43 mins
Stuart/Beccy/Georgie	18.7 m	38 mins

### Dive 2: Anchor Point, Loch Fyne

Several nice reefs. Iain discovered a new one while teaching compass work...but managed to send everyone else in the wrong direction so that they missed the main attraction! Repeating the mistake himself, Alexey and he found some grey sea bed, but a monster seven-armed starfish. For future reference: Head out from the shore at 270 degrees for about 10m, then turn right. If you head too far north, you end up on top of the reef, which is very flat and merges seamlessly with the seabed. Many people ended up missing this one and going to a similar reef

further north, needing a longer swim back.

Further details of the "new" reef will be included once Iain gets back there and checks that it is actually a new reef and not the one that everyone was supposed to dive on!

<b>Buddy pair</b>	<b>Max depth</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Ian/Ro	22.1 m	45 mins
Iain/Alexey	16.9 m	21 mins
Karin/Maksim	19.6 m	44 mins
Stuart/Beccy/Georgie	19.2 m	36 mins

### **Day 3: Monday 6th July 2009**

#### **Dive 1: St. Catharine's, Loch Fyne**

Right at the wheelie bin! A bit like Anchor point, but with a bloke's fishing retreat!

<b>Buddy pair</b>	<b>Max depth</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Ian/Ro	18.0 m	45 mins
Georgie/Beccy	17.7 m	44 mins
Karin/Maksim/Alexey	17.2 m	42 mins

#### **Dive 2: Conger Alley, Loch Long**

There's no place like gnome!

<b>Buddy pair</b>	<b>Max depth</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Ian/Ro	22.3 m	45 mins
Georgie/Beccy	20.5 m	36 mins
Karin/Maksim/Alexey	19.2 m	38 mins

### **Day 4: Tuesday 7th July 2009**

Alexey fell in a bog! [Can I get away with a 'Black Russian' joke?]

We went for a walk just north of Lennoxton (north Glasgow), including lunch at the summit. The walk is best described as a little boggy in places, but no one went in much beyond their knees.

As is traditional these dive trips, we stopped at the Wetherby Whaler for dinner.