

Porthkerris, April 2013

Trip organised by Ruth Charles

Report by Ruth Charles

The Divers:

- > Stuart Moore
- > Max Jamilly
- > Ruth Charles
- > Mareike Wiedmann
- > KT Roberts
- > Amanda Dalby
- > Lars Doelken

Details

The weather forecast for the trip was not great. The dive centre at Porthkerris forwarned us that they'd been experiencing strong easterlies for some time, meaning that diving was unlikely to be viable in their bay and so they gave us the option of cancelling. But CUUEG was undaunted, everyone talked this over on Thursday night and decided to proceed as we all wanted a break. So we decided we were having a holiday, and if we could dive during this it would be a bonus.

Stuart and Mareike formed an advance party heading down on Thursday night with a car loaded with cylinders and kit, pausing overnight at a Travelodge. On Friday the strong easterlies were out in force, so they explored the Eden Project whilst the rest of the group drove down. On Friday evening everyone converged on Porthkerris, unloaded the cars and on the dive centre's recommendation headed off to the [Five Pilchards](http://www.thefivepilchards.co.uk/) (<http://www.thefivepilchards.co.uk/>) in Porthallow. It was an excellent recommendation, and we feel there is room for a CUUEG tradition here. We also learnt that distributing German speakers evenly between cars is useful if you need to leave "secret" notes explaining where you have hidden the only key to the accommodation in plain sight for late arriving cars.

Our accommodation at Porthkerris was in their new log cabin, which provides very comfortable self-catering accommodation for groups of up to 8 people. We were all impressed with the facilities and comfort of the cabin, and the group rate for 5 days was very good value. The dive centre seems to have its own petting zoo, and we were surrounded by Peacocks, Turkeys and Guinea Fowl which led to an interesting version of the dawn chorus each day.

Saturday was bright and sunny. Up on the hill the winds did not seem too bad, so we loaded cars, headed down to the beach and got kitted up. On the beach the surf looked a tad more ominous but we decided to proceed. Stuart and Mareike were to go in first, after Stuart had briefed us about entering and exiting from the shore with waves breaking around us. On entry it became clear that conditions were somewhat tougher than we had anticipated, and that morning's diving was aborted due to an almost complete absence of visibility. I have to say that falling over while helping Stuart in and having the full-on "washing machine" experience in the breakers was not too awful as I had my mask on and had made sure my dry suit was zipped up, points anyone helping a diver into the water under such conditions should bear in mind.



On the beach at Porthkerris

After all that excitement we picniced on the beach and spent the afternoon there basking in the sun. Lars tried his hand at fishing for a while, and Stuart attempted some snorkelling, confirming absolutely that Porthkerris was not diveable that day :-)

On Sunday we headed to the other side of the Lizard and try our luck at Mullion Cove. This was a new dive site for the club, so we approached it with caution. After paying the diving charge in the tea shop, Max and Lars went in to investigate. Access is by walking down a steep slipway into the harbour, with a short swim out through the harbour wall. There is a band of kelp by the mouth of the harbour that leads onto a sandy bottom, with one group of pinnacles to the south east of the harbour wall and another big pinnacle to the north west. The water looked clear and calm, and it soon became apparent to everyone on the harbour wall that it was rather shallow. Max and Lars they struggled to get their DSMB up [insert the usual innuendo here]. However, they had a good long dive, whilst their squad of giggling female admirers watched from the harbour wall. Everyone got at least one dive at Mullion, while Max somehow managed 3 and emerged grinning like a demented otter (we have the photographs!).



Kitting up at Mullion

On Monday Porthkerris looked rougher, so we headed across to Mullion again. At first sight it looked hopeful, but the first buddy pair returned within a few minutes reporting that low visibility and the conditions outside the harbour wall made this undiveable. We had lunch, packed up our kit and spent the afternoon exploring St Ives instead. Max found the kiddies arcade, and Stuart bought himself an ornamental glass tree! Ruth and Lars settled for ice creams in the rain.

On Tuesday the weather was just as bad. Lars and KT needed to get back to Cambridge that night and left, while the rest of the group went to the Eden Project. We explored the domes (flooded they'd make a great dive sight), admired the sculptures, climbed up to the high viewing platform inside the tropical dome and sulked a little that the longest zip-wire in Europe wasn't operating that day.

By Wednesday it looked that Porthkerris might just be diveable, so before leaving that afternoon we had a final attempt to dive in the bay. Vis was low - maybe 2-3m, and there was quite a bit of swell but we each managed a dive. Porthkerris is clearly a good dive site when the weather is with you, and we saw lots of anemonies and an assortment of sea life amongst the kelp before heading home in different cars.



Max and Stuart followed different routes home (Max's car stopped for a quick view of Stonehenge, and found dinner at the [Jeckyl and Hyde](http://jekyllhydeturgisgreen.co.uk/) (<http://jekyllhydeturgisgreen.co.uk/>) near Basingstoke). The power of TXT meant we knew roughly where the two cars were in relation to each other, and the race was on after both groups had finished dinner, Max joining the M4 about 20 minutes ahead of Stuart. By the M25 Stuart was getting closer, and he continued to reduce our lead as we sped up the A1, overtaking us finally on the Baldock to Royston Road. Both groups making it back to Cambridge and the kit store at about the same time.

Stuart's slow cooker proved a great bonus in providing hearty and filling meals ready and waiting for everyone at the end of each day. Our evenings were spent playing games and watching DVDs. It was a relaxing break for everyone before the start of Easter Term, but perhaps a little lacking on the diving front. I think we'd all like to go back there when the weather is better and dive Porthkerris and Mullion again, and hope that the good folks at Porthkerris will host us again.
