

Swanage 4th & 5th September 2004

Well, after a week's rather variable weather with most of the previous weekend's diving cancelled, we were not hopeful that the Swanage weekend would happen.

The same weekend in 2003 was at the end of a glorious and hot summer and underwater, the vis. was reported in the 15 metre range.

We knew we were not going to get that, but what would we get?

The intrepid 10 divers gathered at Lymington early on the Saturday and following the arrival of "Captain Womble", we set sail aboard New Dawn Diver into a fine and calm Solent at 7am.



• Capt. Womble at the wheel

Our first dive was to be The 1149 ton Norwegian steamer Borgny. At 228ft long with a beam of 36ft, she was sunk while heading up-Channel near the Isle of Wight on 26 February, 1918, carrying 1500 tons of coal from Newport for Rouen.



• Etienne's shot of a friendly conger

At 28 metres max. depth, there was some concern that the lights would go out well before we reached the bottom.

As it turned out, the visibility was about 3 to 4 metres and there was plenty to see, with a large free-swimming conger seen by most of the dive party.

The rudder post and prop on The Borgny were an impressive sight, and as a "first" dive site for everyone, the Borgny made a good start to the weekend.

Back aboard the New Dawn Diver, we had a very leisurely sail to Swanage where we deposited the cylinders from the first dive with Divers Down on the pier for refills.

Our decision to forewarn the guys at the dive centre of our arrival and fill requirements certainly paid dividends and they set to on the mass fill with gusto.

As our second dive (on the Kyarra) wasn't until about 2.30pm, we had a gentle bob at anchor in Swanage bay and watched the world go by.

The sun had by this time firmly established itself and the factor 30 was being slapped around like it was going out of fashion.

There were still some "deck chair" stripes on faces, and by the end of the weekend, we looked like a lost herd of rare Pandas.

They say that slack water is an inexact science, and so it proved to be for the second dive of the day on the Kyarra.

The BSAC incident pit scenario came close to knocking on our collective doors with a few near misses and fun and games, due in part, to the fierce current above the wreck for most of the dive.



• The Kyarra in her heyday

Memorable quote from Kev that "things were getting rather unpleasant", being an understatement for his particular predicament. Don't worry though Kev, if it had all gone wrong, Etienne would have taken a picture of it for posterity!

We think that the tally of lost kit on that dive was a reel, SMB, torch and knife. Next time you dive the Kyarra, have a look about and see what you can find of the items we left behind.

Rummaging Danny did though find three very pretty glass perfume bottle stoppers amongst the holes in what was left of the hold. Very nice!

All back aboard (some just about), we ambled back to Swanage and deposited the remainder of our cylinders for filling. In total, Divers Down pumped 15 twinsets, 3 single 15 litre tanks and 6 ponies – well done those men!

A wash and brush-up later and feeling almost human, we repaired to the centre of Swanage metropolis for a few beers and a selection of comestible products.

Those with B&B arranged tottered off to their cosy beds and the remaining three intrepid travellers boarded the

inflatable for the perilous journey across high seas back to New Dawn Diver. (Perilous in the fact that the skipper was three sheets to the wind!)

It is reported that, further to the recent hurricanes Charley and Francis in Florida, there was a hurricane Kev detected on weather radar (and noses) during the night in central downtown Swanage. Lasting only six seconds (continuous gust), several roof slates were dislodged and a small cat was blown away. Tony Blair has declared Kev's arse a disaster zone.

Sunday dawned clear, bright and hot again and a 40 minute motor out from Swanage took us to the site of the Aeolian Sky, a barely year old vessel which sank in late '79 following a collision



• The Aeolian Sky

with another vessel.

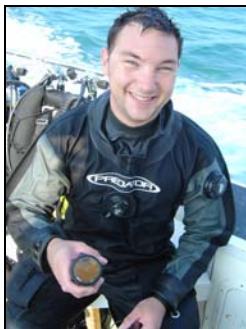
At over 10,000 tons, the Sky is a large ship and is only partially broken up, so making parts of her structure very recognisable.

Sharing another boat's shot line, in our divers went onto the stern and enjoyed an hour's tour around the aft end of the wreck. There were reports of cuttlefish being sighted, but less marine life than on the other wrecks.



• The Aeolian Sky as she is now

No trinkets found on this dive, other than a strange coffee filled torch – bought brand new by Colette (the Pompey torch mangler) only the afternoon before and now comprehensively flooded by Matt.



• like my new torch?

With the Sky being a 9am slack dive and the second dive not being until 3.15pm, we had a good part of the day to relax and while away before we went into the water again.

Richard chugged into the eastern part of Swanage Bay and dropped anchor, giving us a good three hours for lunch and relaxation.

There were, of course, those who got itchy feet, and following an early example of ice diving from Ian, Steve decided to join in and see how far the bottom was down (4.2 metres – you can tell by looking at the depth sounder Steve).

As evidence of reaching the bottom of the sea, Steve came up clutching a handful of mud and a beaming smile. We think it was mud anyway.

Not to be outdone, Matt entered - water and hypothermia resulted almost at the same instant.



• boys will be boys

For only one of very few times in his life, he was speechless as the refreshing 18 degree water took his breath and confidence away. Not so smart now are you?

As for the others, well they reclined on the foredeck, aft deck, cabin and anywhere else a comfy spot could be found.

While all the frenetic activity was going on around us with water skiers, wet bikes and cruisers gadding about, our group just chilled out.



• wake me up when it's time to dive ...

Our last dive of the weekend was the Venezuela, a cargo ship in 29 metres.

Down the shot and a short

swim on 270 degrees (that's due WEST Matt) brought us to what's left of the wreck. Not rising far off the seabed, the most visible parts are the boilers and engines, which are a haven for some large congers.

Although the vis. was again only about 3 metres, there was still lots to see (and hear as "Fatboy" zoomed past from time to time).

Lots of friendly blennies were to be found in the nooks



• rounding the Isle of Wight

& crannies amongst engine parts, making this another new site for everyone on board. It still is for Matt and Colette who did a 29m drift instead.

The return to Lymington in 28 degree sunshine with a chilled fruit wine from M&C's cellar on the foredeck was very pleasurable and a great way to round off the weekend.

The only wish would have been for better vis. underwater, but you can't have everything, can you?

Everything else was just about spot on!