

Friday 20th to Sunday 22nd May 2011

Shaun and Tracey

4 hour journey from Leicester, arriving at the campsite, Ord House Country Park (just one mile from the Scottish border) at 4.30pm.

Pitched the tent quickly and then shot down to St. Abbs harbour, approximately 20mins drive from the campsite. Weather good, sea calm, sun trying to break through. Arrived at 5.30pm. Tide coming in. Kitted up in the early evening sunshine overlooking the harbour. The car park was virtually empty as most divers had left for the day.

Did a shore dive from the end of the harbour. Tricky entry but manageable (just)! Dropped down and attempted to find Cathedral Rock, but lost our way in the huge kelp forest and ended up at Black Carrs. Vis not too bad, water temp pleasant. Saw Wrasse, jellyfish, lobsters and starfish. Maximum depth 15.6m. Lovely dive, but the entry and exit were hard work. Had our tea sat on the harbour wall, with a family of swans enjoying the early evening sun.

Drove back down on Saturday to do two more shore dives. Tide out all day therefore no opportunity to enter via the shore until late afternoon/early evening. First dive again from the end of the harbour, entry much easier this time compared to Friday. Dive plan was to surface swim to Cathedral Rock using the bearings we'd taken during low tide when the tip of the neighbouring rocks were exposed, combined with local maps. Successfully dropped down very close to Cathedral. Vis good. Swam through Cathedral Rock in both directions, accompanied by a very friendly Wrasse! Finned around the area appreciating the corals, fish and attempting to avoid the kelp forest! Also saw Pollack, crab and jellyfish. Dive two, shore dive. Over the car park wall near Seagull Rock. Planned to surface swim to Seagull Rock, drop down and circumnavigate the rock taking in the opportunity to explore the cave at the far side. Made our descent, but the vis was poor and after a short time down a technical hitch forced us to abandon the dive.

Sunday, 2 boat dives with Skipper Paul Crowe on Tiger Lilly – only 7 of us on the boat, so plenty of room and Tiger Lilly also benefits from a lift. First dive north out of the harbour to Anemones' Gully, maximum depth 15.4m. Vis very good. Very pretty dive, with a white sand bottom and walls covered in beautiful anemones and corals. Again, saw Wrasse, crabs and starfish. Second dive at Ebb's Carr, south out of the harbour. Maximum depth 12.6m. Another pretty dive, but this time we saw the remains of the Alfred Earlsden wreck – all that remains is the boiler and some scraps of metal – sadly we didn't find the boiler but did find quite a few chunks of coral covered wreckage. The rocks are covered in the usual array of deadman's fingers, cold water corals and quite a bit of a marine life although we failed to find the infamous wolfish!

This divesite is excellent for pleasure dives and particularly good for trainees as none of the dives exceed 20m (except for the Glanmire wreck at St. Abbs Head, which hits 33m, but we didn't do that ourselves). Paul Crowe not only owns Tiger Lilly, but also owns the Rock House Diving B & B and has an air fill station, both situated very conveniently in the harbour. Boat dives were £15 each and a 12L air fill costs £3.30. There are two car parks in the harbour, the upper one is owned by the local Council and they charge £7 for the day, the lower car park is owned by the National Trust and is cheaper for the day at just £5.

All in all, a very pleasant weekend's diving ☺