

Port Gaverne September 2009

Wrecks reefs and Dolphins

The weekend of the 26th 27th of September had been in the diary for most of the year as our 3rd trip to Port Gaverne. A bit late in the year but you need nice small neaps to dive the north coast on anything other than slack. So as the weekend drew near I watched the forecast intently, would the Indian summer continue for just a few more days. I checked in with Steve Hutchinson at Harlyn Diving to ensure we could get air and for a couple of site suggestions and all was set.

I needn't have worried the gods were once again on our side and it was a dry evening as we left the boat shed for the 90 minute drive to the campsite and B and B at St. Kew Highway. With the tents up for the campers, rooms sorted for the softer souls and the boats safely parked it was time for the final planning session in the Red Lion, not the busiest pub you've ever been in but despite our slightly late arrival they provided a good dinner over which to discuss the following day.

Saturday dawned bright and early for all and we made it to the beach for 9 o'clock. The plan was to dive 2 sites with the first wave on a reef next to Newlands Rock. Even with only a slight swell and a bit of current running the surface was a little bump but having located the reef and dropped in up tide we arrived to find a lovely ridge running off to the north surrounded by odd outcrops and covered in some of the best sea fans around.



I always feel so sad that they are such a rare species. Different from our south coast specimens in that they were stockier and more robust looking. With vis at 15m + and bright granite boulders it was a really good dive.



While the second wave went in on Newlands, Humber 2 went off to find the Germaine and again reported superb vis and a great dive.

After a suitable lunch interval we headed out to the Sphene, one of Padstow's favourite wrecks, when we arrived Hutch was already on site with his divers in so we couldn't drop a shot. But wanted one for the second wave. Answer, take the shot down of course, so after a bit of careful boat handling Rosemarie and I were in the water and I had the shot over my shoulder and began a fairly swift descent passing a couple of rather startled divers on the way down. With the shot safely in we set off around this flattened 25m wreck, she has been blown up and wire swept but still retains some character with her prop still set upright under the transom.



But the best thing about the site is the abundance of fish life.



She is a magnet for all the local populations and at times is obscured by huge shoals of Pollack and Bib, all this provides the perfect breeding ground for some of the biggest Congers you're likely to see. So another superb dive and home for tea. Well curry in Wadebridge in fact but a good day all round.

Sunday dawned bright and warm and the wreckies fancied doing the Germaine again and as we had a slightly different group we decided to do the Sphene again in the afternoon as she is not tide dependent on a neap. That left the morning and I fancied the Outer Gulland reef a couple of miles off Padstow, a bit of a drive over but we dived it a year previously and it had been good, so worth the effort.

Was it ever, I can honestly say that Dominic and I had one of the best dives I've ever had in the UK, Scillies (my favourite place) included. Once below the kelp at about 18m you're on clean granite pinnacles surrounded by

white sand. The vis was crystal clear with the sun shining on the surface at 26m so horizontal vis was at least 20m.

Dominic found a huge crayfish stood out on a rock waiting for us to admire him, to get an idea of size I reached out to him but his antenna touched my body before my fingers reached him. He was magnificent. Others also met him. Well that could have been a highlight in itself, but more was to follow. Dom and I where moving to the west and had a large rock outcrop ahead. As we approached I noticed a nice area of clean sand at it's base and a deep area of shadow, finning down to investigate I thought I'd found a shallow cave but as I got nearer I realised I could see light through it. A swim thru!! and what a swim thru at 29m with strong sun light and white sand it could have been any where warm and sunny you can think of. In the underpass where shoals of fish avoiding the dangers of the daylight and we emerged in to a canyon that disappeared down 40m below us. It was an absolutely stunning feature and one I hope to find again. I run out of words for this dive, it was truly awesome.

So a good morning all round, what of the afternoon, still a beautiful day so we expected good things of the Sphepe, which didn't disappoint again 15m vis and surrounded in fish of every hue with huge congers in amongst the plates.



Dom and I were diving second wave and as we where watching Allan and Carol surface a pod of common dolphins appeared to seaward, as they approached I realised they were going to be very close to Allan and Carol so hung back to let them enjoy the spectacle, after letting them have their fun for 5 minutes.



I picked them up so Dom and I could have our dive. Passing Rosemarie and James on the shot both grinning like Cheshire cats as the Dolphins circled them. After a really nice dive on the wreck we made our way up to

our stop and discovered that the dolphins were still there. Allan had been keeping them entertained with the RIB and so we were treated to the most fabulous view as they circled us coming in close and then veering away. Time flew by on the stop and the dolphins left as we surfaced. What an excited boat load of divers arrived back on the beach ready and eager to discuss how we could surpass this next year.

If you want to find out, make a note in your diary for the 18th and 19th September 2010.