

Pembroke Trip Report: 25th to 28th May **2007**

Trip Organizer was Richard Rowley, overseen by Mark Bell.

We stayed at: South Cocketts,
Broadway,
Little Haven,
Haverford West,
SA62 3TU
01437 781296

This is the same campsite Anjali used in 2003; the owners are very approachable and live at the site, although I never got their names. We were able to park the boats with our tents. Showers were 20p a go.

They charged: £8 per night for a single tent, £12 for a double, £15 for a triple, £17 for a quad and £25 for Vicki's six person tent. An extra person in a tent was £4 per night. Not the cheapest but the facilities were quite nice and they are happy to take a mixed group booking from a university sports club; unlike many other "family" campsites...

Admiralty Leisure Charts:

SC 2878 *Approaches to Milford Haven*

1:25,000; I used this for details of the estuary.

SC 1478 *Saint Govan's Head to Saint David's Head*

1:75,000; this chart covers the whole area, including Skomer Island but obviously with less detail.

We launched from: Gelliswick Slipway

Pembrokeshire Yacht Club
Gelliswick Bay,
Hakin,
Milford Haven,
SA73 3RS.
01646 692799

This is Pembrokeshire Yacht club's HQ where there is a public slipway (free!) that we could use at Low Water; unlike Little Haven, Martin's Haven or Dale Harbour which are all more useful launch sites for the various dive sites this part of Pembrokeshire has to offer but are un-useable at Low Water.

It is on the north side of the estuary a bit further upstream from Dale yet considerably further seaward than Neyland (another alternative I discussed with the Coastguard). It is marked on chart 2878 and also has plenty of on-road parking (again: free!) and also public toilets.

[See additional notes]

Our air shop was: West Wales Divers,
Hasguard Cross,
Dale Road, (this is the B4327)
SA62 3SJ
01437 781452

They were very helpful on the phone, and have a café that serves breakfast and will prepare reasonably priced packed lunches if you give them a bit of notice. They charged £3.50 for a 12 or twin 7s and all their air is double-filtered. They can supply nitrox up to 40% if you leave cylinders overnight. Their opening hours over the weekend of the trip were 0730 – 1800/1900 – absolutely awesome!

They are in a more convenient location for Little Haven (my intended centre of operations) than Dale, although they are not too far away. They are also very close to the campsite we used. They are, however, quite a trek from Gelliswick and they're not the quickest place to get a batch of cylinders filled.

Coastguard: Milford Haven 01646 690909

We hired the van from: H&H Van Hire,
107e Bartholomew Road
London
NW5 2AR
020 7916 6616 (phone)

020 7916 6617 (fax)

We hired a high-top long wheelbase Ford Transit with a tow hitch to collect on the Friday and return by 9AM on the Tuesday for £235.00. They hold £200 on your card as a deposit; this is cancelled a few working days after the vehicle is returned. You can also pay the congestion charge when you collect a van from them.

[See additional notes]

Dive Sites:

Saturday AM: Dakotian 51° 42' .20N 5° 08' .32W

Saturday PM: Adamantios J Pithis 51° 40' .78N 5° 10' .40W.

The co-ordinates end in decimals. For extra co-ordinates (you need three to form a search area) just do web searches and check out divernet.com and BSAC branch trip reports. You can also find some very useful information on the ships themselves and how they came to be wrecked. There is also plenty of information on scenic dives available too.

Trip Report:

On the Saturday strong Northerly winds made the planned "pick your depth" wall dives on the North face of Skomer Island unfeasible. This was a real shame as it provides something for everyone depth-wise with a good variety of wild-life and the potential for some seal action.

Although parts of its topography do offer shelter from both flood- and ebb- tides (effectively stretching slack windows – watch the currents here unless you want a drift dive!), there was no protection from a Northerly wind. The South face is much less interesting.

Either face would have necessitated an exposed boat journey from Little Haven or Martin's Haven which in those conditions could well have left people in an unfit state to dive when they arrived at the dive site.

Additionally, due to Low Water occurring at the exact time we needed to launch on the Saturday, Gelliswick was the only place we could use to launch (we owe Milford Haven Coastguard a big thank you for their help on this one!).

Thankfully we could dive in the area around the *Dakotian*, the *Behar* and the *Adamantios J Pithis* (aka the "Greek" wreck), because they are protected from Northerly winds by their location in the estuary, and were reachable from the only place we could use to launch! These three wrecks are all very near Dale; the *Dakotian* and the *Behar* are pretty much touching. We found 17 – 18M on the *Dakotian* and 15 - 16M on the *Adamantios J Pithis*.

Saturday was a very long day – we left Gelliswick at nearly 2000; maybe it seemed earlier because the longest day is at about the time of the end of May bank holiday weekend. West Wales Divers is also quite a journey from Gelliswick to get air fills between dives – it is far more convenient for both Little Haven and the campsite but in the circumstances it was the best we could do.

The wind and surface conditions made diving on the Sunday impossible and very unlikely for the Monday – unless we wanted to be diving very late on the Monday afternoon with a six or seven hour drive back to London...

For this reason we let people sleep in on the Saturday morning and prepared to break camp. It had rained very heavily all night and people could nearly go snorkelling in the tents... It was decided to travel to Cardiff where Jer's Dad let us all crash at his house! That really was very, very good of him and it enabled us to go on a night out in Cardiff and then to have a shorter journey to Vobster Quay inland dive site in Somerset where we got two dives in on the Monday during the journey home. It is a little hard to find but well worth it when you do.

Vobster charge a £15 entry fee. However, NQIs with certification get in free with four "trainees". Non-diving shore cover is also free so we were able to reduce this a bit. The staff knew that for the most part we weren't "training" but they actually encouraged us to book ourselves into Vobster in this fashion and save some money! As we did, you can save time at the entry gates by having the

group booking forms from their website filled in before you get there.

Vobster Quay contains loads of cool stuff to dive. Most of these have numbered shot-lines so you can easily swim out to one buoy and take a bearing to another making it possible to visit two or more sites during one dive. The aircraft fuselage is particularly cool (don't tell me you're a diver who hasn't seen *Thunderball*?!?). We were also able to do some new SD 25M depth progressions there as well.

Vobster charge a £15 entry fee. However, NQIs with certification get in free with four "trainees". Non – diving shore cover is also free so we were able to reduce this a bit. The staff knew for the most part that we weren't "training" but they actually encouraged us to book ourselves into Vobster in this way and save some money! You can save time at the entry gates by having the group booking forms from their website filled in before you get there.

There are three other important things to know about Vobster. You have to pay a £10 deposit for a numbered key fob which you must return when you leave – you can use this as credit for air fills too and get back the change when you leave. They also have free showers. Finally, Vobster has the best burger shack of any inland site I've visited. The burgers really do taste of meat...

Vobster Quay Inland Diving

Vobster Quay Ltd,

Upper Vobster,

Mells,

BA3 5SA

01373 814666 (general enquiries)

01373 814666 (training only)

01373 814678 (fax)

<http://www.vobsterquay.co.uk>

info@vobsterquay.co.uk

webmaster@vobsterquay.co.uk

Additional Notes:

- When you buy a chart for a trip, also buy the relevant OS map. Use Internet-based map programs to locate specific

places by postcode then translate this into grid references and photocopy the relevant sections because road maps do not give sufficient detail once you are nearly at a campsite or air shop...

- Be very cautious of supplying your drivers with route plans from the Internet site of motoring organizations – they will get you nearly where you want to go before they let themselves down by lack of detail or (quite often) inaccurate estimates of distance between turnings.
- If you intend to use Gelliswick, it is not marked on chart 1478 or many road atlases – further reason to use an OS map.
- Although in good weather inflatable boats are fine around Skomer Island (and I know of other BSAC branches which use them there) the Coastguard did advise me to use RIBs wherever possible.
- Bartholomew Road NW5 now has residents' parking restrictions. H&H van hire can only give you visitor's permits for up to two hours; and they had none of these for my trip. They are fine to use if your van collector is going there by public transport. However, whoever returns it must have alternative ways to get home because you can no longer leave a vehicle there for the duration of a weekend trip.
- This has the potential to seriously complicate arrangements for the van's return. If there is also a ULU vehicle to return, it may be worth considering alternative hire firms to avoid the chaos and inconvenience caused to some drivers at the end of trips.