

### **Portland trip, 5/6<sup>th</sup> May 2007**

The weekend started off well with fine weather on the Saturday morning. Got the boats into the water (need to pay for launching, and again a charge for if you want to dive inside the breakwater, at Aquasport Hotel – Tel 01305 860 269), kitted them up and headed out to the Binnendyk – 50 32.62N/02 20.36W (all points are WGS84 adjusted), 4 miles out of the breakwater. This wreck is great although can suffer from poor light conditions when you are on the wreck. This was an issue on this trip as once below about 20m it went really dark. Not a major issue as long as you and your buddy have a good torch each. There is lots of fish life although the wreck is well broken up due to its exposed nature. The depth on the chart is stated at about 15m but you ideally want to plan for around 25m. For lunch we ate at the Aquasport Hotel, which is at the Castletown launch and where you get airfills. They do a good range of hot and cold food, and if you ask you can normally leave the cylinders in the airshop overnight, which makes life a lot easier.

In the afternoon we dived the Grove Point/Balaclava bay drift (50 33.46N/02 24.92W), with a max depth given as 25m, but no-one got more than 22m on this spring tide. This is a great dive and the first time we had dived this far along Balaclava bay. Ideally you want to drop divers off on a shot about half way along between the breakwater and Grove Point, otherwise your divers could be pulled into part of the race around Grove Point. Luckily if this does happen though they will be naturally moved into calmer water where you can pick them up, but it is best to warn them about this. (Thankfully this was not an issue on our trip). The drift does not run parallel to the shore but it swirls clockwise as the water moves along from the breakwater towards the Bill of Portland. The current can easily exceed 2 knots, so let your divers know it will be quick. (The current runs to 9 hours out of 12). A great dive although not loads of life. More a fun dive as it is pretty thrilling but there did not seem to be any up or down currents, so quite safe.

That evening we had a great bar-b-q at the campsite (Pebble Bank Campsite – very convenient and a good price – bit of a dodgy bar though. Tel: 01305 774 844). If you want to buy any great amount of food it is best to drive to the huge Asda at Weymouth, where there is free parking. If you are just after a few odds and ends then there are lots of little shops in between the campsite the launch at Castletown. There are numerous dive shops, a couple of pubs and a newsagent at Castletown too.

Next day the wind had increased. We planned to get out to Lulworth Banks (50 35.66N/02 17.22W) for brass shell hunting, but the weather was against us so we turned around less than 2 nm out of the breakwater and headed back to dive the Dredger in Balaclava Bay (max depth 10m). This is a great dive, despite the fact that some other boats were on it that day too. In the afternoon we dived an unidentified wreck (max depth 15m) on the close to the Encuri. This was a great wreck and lots of life.

That evening we went out for a curry at Weymouth Tandoori on Maiden St in Weymouth (01305 776 744), but it is not fantastic quality or value, so it may be worth looking for something a little more suitable. After that we headed back to bar at the campsite, which was pretty terrible.

The next day we were blown out so headed home.

This was a great weekend and I would recommend the drift dive along Balaclava Bay to Grove Point. Just beware that divers do not all drift at the same speed of in the same manner, so boat cover is essential.

For fuel we used the Esso garage, close the campsite, on Lanehouse Rocks Road. To get to this head straight up and over the hill after the right hander (as if driving to Pebble Banks, rather than turning left into Camp Road.) The petrol station is on the other side of the hill at the bottom, about ½ mile after the Camp Road turning. This is easy enough to get into towing a boat and the shop has a good selection of forecourt food.

Dives sites considered for this weekend launching at Castletown (distances from breakwater) –

Binnendyk – 50 32.62N/02 20.36W, 4nm

Lulworth Banks – 50 35.66N/02 17.22W, 5nm

Shambles Fishing Ground – 50 30.46N/02 22.42W, 4nm

Alex Van Opstal – 50 32.44N/02 15.95W, 6nm

Aeolian Sky – 50 30.51N/02 08.25W, 11nm

Grove Point Drift – 50 33.46N/02 24.92W, 1nm

Black Hawk – 50 36.64N/02 12.43W, 8nm

Elena R – 50 30.15N/02 20.58W, 5nm