

ULSAC Trip Report Form

Please include on this form any details you think will help organise another trip to this area. Please include details of any problems encountered, or any particularly good things/places in the area, such as good or awful restaurants and pubs.

Logistics

Date	22-25 August 2008	Springs <input type="checkbox"/> Neaps <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Venue	Farne Islands	
Marshal	Anjali Shah	
Overseer	Marcus and Zoe Allen	
Number of People	18	
List of attendees with Diver Grade in brackets (e.g SD, DL etc)	Anjali Shah (DL)	Steve Stewart (DL)
	Marcus Allen (1 st class)	Nicholas John (DL)
	Michelle Kim (AD)	Ruth Brown (DL)
	Alyn Morgan (DL)	Sarah Tuck (SD)
	Mairead Conneely (DL)	Kamila Tomaszewska (SD)
	Sarah Cant (DL)	Ruth Richardson (SD)
	Jeremy Davey (DL)	Gloria Jaconelli (SD)
	Susie Fisher (DL)	Tom Roberts (SD)
	Ali Gaudion (DL)	Kat Sizer (DL)
Accommodation	<p>Farnes Diving Services campsite - Run by Stan and Lee Hall.</p> <p>The grassy area for tents is on the opposite side to the church by Beadnell Hall Flats. Sign says Farnes Diving Services.</p> <p>There is a toilet / shower block with 2 male and 1 female shower, toilets & hand basins.</p> <p>Plenty of room for RIBs. The facilities are basic.</p>	
Address	<p>St. Ebbas House Beadnell Northumberland NE67 5AP</p>	
Telephone No.	(01665) 720615	
Cost per night/per tent/per person or as appropriate	£8 per tent per night, but we got a nice discount.	
Notes	They let us leave one RIB in their driveway for a week, which was very useful for both the Mull and Farnes trips.	
Launch Site (inc. cost)	<p>We launched out of Seahouses. It was very busy on Saturday morning with a long queue of boats waiting to launch. We berthed overnight, which saved a lot of hassle.</p> <p>Seahouses £10 to launch a boat +2 people. £2 extra for each person. Parking £4 per day. Open 8:30am till 6pm Can berth overnight for £10. (Harbourmaster - 01665 720 033)</p> <p>Note: the middle harbour is the commercial harbour and is not for use by public.</p> <p>Beadnell harbour with £20 tractor launch from 8am till 6pm. Private tractor lunch by Richard Patterson 07889 386 842. Beadnell car parking charge: £4.40 per day</p>	
Coastguard	Humber Coastguard 01262 672317	
Nearest chamber	North of England Medical Hyperbaric Unit (Hull) 01482 659471	
Air Shop	<p>Sovereign Diving Air and diving shop on an industrial estate (not on main street) £3 per fill, more for nitrox. Southfield House, 143 Main St, Seahouses, Northumberland, . NE68 7TT. Tel: 01665 720059 http://www.sovereigndiving.co.uk/</p>	
Van Hire (inc. notes, did you breakdown, AA cover, tow bar etc.)	<p>H & H van hire Kentish town 020 7916 6616 £193 for 3 days – from Friday to Tuesday morning. The long-wheeled based transit van.</p>	

Dives

Dive 1	
Site:	Knivestone with Abyssinia wreckage
Max depth:	28 metres
GPS Marks:	55 39.054N 001 36.138W 55 38.950N 001 36.050W
Brief description:	<p>http://www.divemagazine.co.uk/news/article.asp?UAN=2071&v=5&sp= http://www.dcordes.freeuk.com/farnes.htm</p> <p>The Abyssinia vessel was a steel 5753-ton four masted German steamship. On 3rd September 1921 the vessel was in ballast from Hamburg to the UK when she stranded on the Knivestone reef and became a total wreck. The wreck lies in a north to south direction close to and parallel with the western side of the reef. Three broken boilers, two of which now lie on their sides, are almost up against the submerged western wall, on a sloping bank that eventually levels out at 18m. The dive site is a slack water dive as she is in the middle of the tidal flow of Seal-gut.</p> <p>This was an excellent dive with lots of marine life, such as baby lobsters, butter fish and soft corals. Many caught glimpses of the ever-present seals.</p>

Dive 2	
Site:	The Crumstone
Max depth:	23 metres
GPS Marks:	55 37.621N 001 36.304W 55 37.687N 001 36.295W
Brief description:	<p>http://www.dcordes.freeuk.com/farnes.htm</p> <p>This was a lovely scenic dive, where at least two pairs spent a significant amount of time playing with seals (see Mairead's article below for more).</p>

Dive 3	
Site:	Whirl Rocks and Jan Van Ryswick wreck
Max depth:	28 metres
GPS Marks:	55 39.80N 01 35.90W
Brief description:	<p>http://www.dcordes.freeuk.com/farnes.htm</p> <p>A fantastic dive site, which must be dived on slack (1.5 hours after HW at North Shields) as discovered out by wave 2 divers.</p> <p>Approximately 200 metres North-North east of Knivestone is the beginning of the notorious reef known as Whirl Rocks. At their highest point, the reefs are only three metres below the surface and are permanently submerged. The reef is about 600 metres in length and lies in two sections, which are divided by a 100 metre wide funnel shaped channel 25 metres deep.</p> <p>They are a formidable barrier against which the sea is forced to change direction, causing the treacherous riptides and over falls, which has given the reef its name. 20 metre canyons and gullies are piled high with the wreckage of ships.</p> <p>Divers descended straight onto the Jan Van Ryswick wreck and then followed a wall covered in soft corals. Many entered a gully and were affected by strong currents. The gully was full of wreckage including anchors and a large lobster was seen.</p>

Dive 4	
Site:	South-East Longstone
Max depth:	28 metres
GPS Marks:	55 38.63N 01 36.45W – Drop divers by the large square rock which is black on top half and lighter brown at bottom at low tide.
Brief description:	<p>Lots of gullies to rummage in and all diving pairs saw seals on this dive. Glimpses of seals were first seen in an amphitheatre-style gully. The end of the dive was very shallow in a kelp forest, which is where all the seals were playing. A few people also decided to snorkel with the seals after their dive.</p>

General Details

We wondered whether the weather would hold for us at the start of the trip, with strong winds predicted throughout the weekend. We decided to be brave and set out from Chiswick on the long journey north.

Facilities at the campsite were basic, but Stan and Lee welcomed us warmly. Lee provided lots of information and advice on suitable dive sites. There was also a fantastic pub 2 minutes walk away from the camping field. It served lovely food and had lots of outside and inside tables to accommodate us all.

The harbourmaster (Captain C.P. Brabban) at Seahouses was very friendly and said he would welcome us back next year. It's highly advisable to get in the queue early to launch the boats, but berthing overnight was great. Public toilets were across the road from the harbour and there were plenty of eateries a couple of minutes walk away. Many people opted to get fish and chips from the Seahouses establishments on the second evening.

It was too windy to dive on Monday of the bank holiday, so kit was washed down at Seahouses and the engines were run through at the campsite.

All in all, a great weekend of diving with everyone raving about their seal encounters.

Farnes dive trip by Mairead Conneely

I'd never been to Farnes before, but I'd heard fabulous reports from other eager members of the club. I was mega-excited about diving there, especially after not diving most of the summer.

After the journey up there, it was a pleasure to arrive to the camp site with the tents already put up – thanks to Tom's car for taking on that task.

On the first dive, which was on the Knivestone with Abyssinia wreckage, we saw an octopus! The first I have ever seen in this country! It took a while to figure out what it was, and I then screamed underwater with excitement for Kamila to look - probably not the best thing to do underwater because it scared off the octopus. It was beautiful and mega-fast.

On the second dive my buddy was Anjali, whom I had never dived with before. We set out on a seal adventure, starting at the Britannia wreck and onto beautiful underwater scenery. The dive was truly amazing, the first seal I saw was in the distance and I thought 'wow'. Then Anjali was pointing behind me to say that there was a seal playing with my fins. So exciting! I screamed again in excitement because Anjali had one at her fins too and with another seal circling. We had a couple of minutes, head-to-head, looking over each other's shoulder to the seals on each others fins. One seal was definitely trying to pull Anjali's fin off. Anjali managed to get a youngish seal come up to her hands a couple of times, which gave me a flashback to minutes before on the boat when Alyn, I think, had told me about how seals have sharp, large teeth. At this point, I was a little nervous and had images of her hand being bitten; the seal opened its mouth to what I can say looked more like children's baby teeth!!!!

The remaining 20 minutes of the dive, we were in about 10m and had the full attention of three seals diving from the surface and coming to play with us from all directions. I don't know who was more inquisitive; the seals about us or us about them. They were like little puppy dogs with huge beautiful eyes, and their elegance underwater is astonishing compared to when they are slumped on the rocks on land. We were both so sad to ascend to the surface, but the seals decided to join us on the ascent as well! I can say this was one of my most memorable moments under water.

Bonus points on the other dives at Whirl Rocks and South-East Longstone, because I saw another octopus - wooooo (and lots more seals around the Longstone).

Farnes is a beautiful location, to which many people come to see the seals and the puffins. However, I feel very lucky and privileged because I didn't have to be on a tour boat to see these beautiful creatures from a distance, but got to play with them amongst the kelp.

Please return completed forms to the Diving Officer asap. Thanks!