

Four of us met up at QAB for our first ocean dive of the season (and Ian's first dive in British seas).

- Tom Templeton (dive marshal)
- Nick Waterfield
- Ian Stratton
- Dave Raggett

The weather proved to be better than expected and we even had a calm sunny period for lunch followed by a light shower for desert. This was a first sea dive of the season, so we took it fairly easy. Just as well as it turned out!

We had problems with the electrics. There seems to be a dodgy connection in the fuse box area. Tom fiddled around and the problem resolved itself, but this needs looking at. The radio doesn't seem to be transmitting, although you can hear the coastguard. Luckily Tom had brought along his hand held radio and was able to use that instead.

Our first dive was on the Scylla. Nick and I went down first. I had problems with trapped air in my drysuit and by the time I sorted that out we had drifted away from the bow marker buoy in the current. Tom put 2KG in my BCD weight pocket and by that time we were even further away. Nick and I held on to the rib and were towed gently back to the buoy. This was very tiring and I used up quite a bit of air in the process.

Second time around, Nick and I exchanged the thumbs down signal and down we went holding onto the chain in the current. We then slowly pootled along the port side with Nick snapping away at the wildlife blossoming on the wreck. Visibility was somewhere around 6 metres or. Having used quite a bit of air in the exertions of the tow, we had a short dive, agreeing to launch the DSMB around 100 bar. We found a railing on the deck somewhere on the aft port side to grab onto, and Nick prepared the reel while I readied my octopus to fill the blob. At that point the current upended me and I struggled for a while against the air in my legs. If it wasn't for the current, it would have been simple, but I didn't want to let go of the railing out of a worry

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of being separated from Nick.

Tom and Ian followed after us, and had a fun time peering into the bridge and hangar, with Tom stopping to clear the lens on the video feed to the National Aquarium. Ian had been concerned about his neck seal which was uncomfortably tight on the boat, but fine under water. For lunch we hung out near the shore. We were behind schedule and as Tom had a problem with water ingressing on his left arm he decided against a second dive, with Ian, Nick and I going down as a threesome on the James Eagan Layne.

This was to be Ian's second dive in British seas and he got on fine. We saw a large wrasse, but I wasn't able to find any crabs despite peering into lots of nooks and crannies. The JEL protected us from the current and we were down for 34 minutes in total. At the safety stop Nick and I both tended to vent too much air and sink down. We were watching each other more than the plankton and dive computer. One's skills get rusty over the Winter! The water temperature was 10 celcius, and Nick must have been cold in his semidry as he got through air quicker than Ian and I despite having a 15 litre cylinder versus our 12's. I was very comfortable in a membrane drysuit with a thermal skin and Flectalon 200 undersuit.

QAB staff warned us that there was a boat show the coming weekend (April 30nd - May 2nd), and that there would be problems with parking and launches. The message was to get there as early as possible to avoid problems (QAB staff start work at 8am).

My thanks to Tom for organizing the trip.