

September 2011



The Frog

Supplement

Written by:

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## A Dream of Seals

On Sunday 24th July, a group of snorkelling divers ventured to the town of Bideford, around 300 miles from Dorking, in search of a chance to dive with seals. These brave divers were: Graham Griffiths, Tim Griffiths, Azhar Hashim, Aimee Hashim, Sue Brown, Paul Madelin, Anthony Hulcoop, Chloe Davey, Adam Woodman (who I will refer to as: "the other Adam" and the coolest guy ever... ME!!) The tale of this adventure is thrilling, but cold.

It all began (for me) at 7:10 am. I arrived at Anthony's house, somewhere in Dorking. This was because Anthony had offered to take me to the land of the seals. "The other Adam", who was also journeying there in Anthony's car, hadn't arrived at the time. I took out my four bags and put them by Anthony's silver Peugeot 307 "SW" (he made me add that part). Just before I could knock on his front door, it opened to reveal the man of the house. Dark bags were under his eyes, however he was very energetic (someone had their Weetabix). He unlocked his vehicle and I put my bags in.

5 minutes later, "the other Adam" arrived in his dad's grey Volvo V50. He quickly put his bags in Anthony's car.

Later, at 7:45 am, the two Adams and Anthony left the only quiet road in Dorking and set off to our Bed n Breakfast.

"The other Adam" persuaded our driver to select "Homer Simpson" as the voice on the sat nav. For four hours I suffered the wrath of Homer Simpson, especially on the motorway due to his

screaming (trust me it gets annoying). My only breaks were the two petrol stations-only one with WiFi!

At 12:00, we arrived at The West Country Inn, to hear Homer Simpson celebrate and bow to Anthony's supposedly "high" IQ, because he managed to get to the correct location. We booked into our two rooms: "the other Adam" and I, and Anthony on his own. After entering the WiFi pass code, we had lunch on one of the inn's picnic benches.

At 1:00pm, Graham and Tim drove into the car park and got out. By that time the sky consisted of clouds and fog. It was evident that the dive that day was to be cancelled. The five of us studied sheets of paper with the tidal and weather predictions. After having a J2O in the warm and comfortable bar we decided that a dive would be impossible.

And so, at 2:30 pm we drove to Heartland Quay. We parked the car near the sea and got out for a walk to a supposedly waterfall. Along the way we saw a few trickles of water which were a bad excuse of a waterfall. We also saw a few possible dive sites for other years.

Finally we reached the real waterfall. It had three layers/edges. As a group of five we walked down the steep steps to the beach below. For about 15 minutes we threw stones, trying to get them to bounce off the rocks and into the rough sea. We soon left, as eight elderly people stripped off to reveal



tight Speedo swimming suits and dived into the deep, cold abyss.

On the way back we found Chloe and her parents heading towards us. They followed us back to the shops opposite to the car park. We entered the shop with the low ceiling where many of us had to stoop a bit. After some of us had purchased some goods we walked down to the sea and discussed our plans for diving.

Within 15 minutes we were on our way back to the inn. When we got back to our home for the night we all had one and a half hours to kill.

And so "the other Adam" and I did what all young teens would do—watch Friends! We saw three episodes: "The One with the Inappropriate Sister", "The One with All the Resolutions" and "The One with Chandler's Work Laugh".

After the last joke on Friends had been executed we went down to find that Tim, Graham, Chloe, Linda, Clive and Anthony were already in the comfy sofas of the inn's coffee area. Just as Anthony told us that the boat we were going on the next day was called the Jessica Hettie we left, as a group, the warmth of the corner and went into the dining room.

There were many choices for food, however the decision process was quite quick.

The starters took a long 15 minutes. Chloe and her parents got a bowl of nachos and dips (looked nice, but none of it was shared with the rest of us), Tim and Graham each got some vegetarian goat's cream cheese stuff (didn't look appetising) and Anthony got a huge bowl of thick green soup (I will leave it to your imagination) and bread. The rest of us hadn't ordered a starter (I was content with my J2O) but the look on "the other Adam's" face revealed that he regretted that decision.

After the end of the crumbs from the nachos were cobbled up, final cheesy thing swallowed down and last lump of green soup slurped (the trails on the bowl looked even worse) the waitress collected the plates and bowls up. This was the sign that our main dishes (first bit of food for me, "the other Adam", Sue and Paul in a long time) were next to come.

As another 15 minutes had passed, we were so hungry that we were going to the toilet to pass the time. Eventually the food arrived (I know this article is meant to persuade you to go next year and that so far the food has taken a bit too long to make you want to go, but trust me, the trip is great!).

I had been given a delicious plate of two eggs, two slices of thick ham and a generous helping of chips. (I will skip talking about other's meals as it would be boring and that as my food was the best, describing the rest's meals would be a let down).

To cut the rest of the meal short: Tim and Graham had a super-fully-loaded banana split with cream and colourful stuff. Sue and Paul shared a yummy chocolate cake (that "the other Adam" and I sneaked a bit into our mouths—"dunno how that happened there").

We finished dinner at 10:30 pm and went straight to bed, after saying goodbye to Graham and Tim and Sue and Paul.

I got to sleep at 11:00 pm. Imagining what snor-kelling with seals would be like with the people I had just had dinner with. We were to meet Azhar and Aimee (his daughter) the next day, who were also going on the dive.

I had set an alarm for 7 o'clock, but I had missed it. When I got up at 7:15 am, I made sure I had everything ready for the day and went down to breakfast.



At 7:45 am, I ordered a full English breakfast without tomatoes and watched as the huge coffee machine made me a hot chocolate. My meal came quickly (maybe they are just slow in the evening). It was great.

After talking with Anthony, "the other Adam" and Chloe & co., I went back to the room to pack up and put my bags in the Peugeot.

We left the inn late at 8:20 am. As Anthony didn't have the post code for the way we were heading- Clovelly harbour, we couldn't use the sat nav. So we had to, like peasants, use a map and directions (a map? This is the 21st Century!). We used signs to get to Heartland.

However, we had difficulties with parking. "The other Adam" was asked by our driver, to get out the directions to the car park from the bag. There were four flyers in the bag, only one had the directions. "The other Adam" had got out three of them and after a long 10 minutes he realised that none of the three flyers contained the directions. Finally we found out where to go and we parked the car, with difficulty, next to a yellow digger.

Clive, Chloe's dad, parked next to us. We took our wetsuits and equipment bags out of the cars and headed down the very steep slope to the harbour.

After three steps, Linda fell over, while holding on a pole/rock. It was very funny, but like a proper gentleman, I automatically asked her if she was ok and carried on walking down the hill.

It took us almost ten minutes to get down. When we did, none of us knew where to go, so I led the way to where the boats were. Then a very strange and quite funny thing happened, a boy- no older than six years old asked if we were going on the Jessica Hettie. I nodded and he led us the way to an inflatable motor... with the skipper of the Jessica Hettie by the tiller.

We got on it and exited it within a minute to step onto a cosy diver's boat. Azhar, Aimee, Tim, Graham, Sue and Paul were already onboard and so was another man, who I assumed was the second in command (but I soon found out that he had very little say or power on the vessel, because the skipper was a very strong willed man). It was about 9:15 am before we set off to Lundy island.

It was a very, very, very long journey to the island of the seals. It was just over an hour, but as we were surrounded by fog, couldn't see a thing and were quite bored, it seemed like forever.

10 minutes before we were to arrive the captain told us it was time to put our kit on. There was enough room for all of us, which was a treat when you are used to the club's small boat (where your fins hit other's faces as you put them on).

I exited the Jessica Hettie (reminder: that's the name of the boat, not a person) into a freezing sea at 10:40 am. (Colder than Kimberidge! Yes I know that's very cold).

We were in two groups: "the other Adam", Anthony, Azhar, Aimee and I were one group. Tim, Graham, Sue, Paul and Chloe consisted of the other group.

In the first three minutes I saw seals! They were fantastic! It was great to see other creatures in the sea, other than tiny fish and Anthony. Although they were big (I mean fat), they glided through the water like torpedoes.

Half way into the dive we joined up with the other group. I took a picture of a seal hugging Tim's fin. Another seal let me stroke it's belly. They were extremely friendly and acted like in a little child's dream (where their cuddly toys move!) I don't dream that, \*cough\*. Back to the dive...



It was amazing and if it wasn't so fffffreezing, then I would have stayed out there for hours. But sadly it was cold, and so we exited the sea, dripping and exhilarated after the 45 minute dive.

We drove round the island to the other side and got off onto dry land by a small pier. The boat left us, to do some transportation of people, while we set up base in a smelly room with a poster of fish in it. There was a mini stony beach, where Chloe, "the other Adam" and I skimmed the stones for a while. We ate our lunch and got ready for the second dive.

Everyone, except "the other Adam", did the second dive, where we swam under the pier and into a cave. Around the cave entrance there was a very strong current, so we left it and crawled along the mini beach, into the sea at the other side. Again the current was very strong, so we ended the dive after half an hour.

We finished our lunch and Azhar relieved himself of the debt of one Mars bar, which he has been in for years (although, after I had finished the chocolate bar, I told him the he was still in that debt, as he had given me a Kit Kat. This, Azhar, is not a Mars bar, so you still owe me one :)

We had 10 minutes enjoying jumping off the pier into the sea before the Jessica Hettie arrived to take us back. It was about 3:00 pm when we boarded it and prepared ourselves for another boring trip back to mainland.

On the journey back, I wrote some notes for this article (I hope you are enjoying this, almost done) and rested my eyes.

We arrived at the harbour at 4:10 pm and then another surprising thing happened (this harbour is full of surprises) the skipper tried to sell us some handmade pottery. I have to say that it wasn't very good so we just ignored it all.

When we stepped on dry land, I got fully dressed

We stopped off at a McDonald's and ate with Chloe's group. It wasn't intentional, but a funny coincidence. I had a small fries, cheese burger and strawberry milkshake (and again, for the same reasons, I won't tell you what the others had).

We arrived back at Anthony's home in the quiet road of Dorking at 11:00 pm. This is the end of a great trip and I very much hope that we can do it again next year. I hope this article didn't bore you and I thank you for reading it all the way through.

Adam Hurt (original Adam member of the Dorking BSAC Snorkelling Club).

**Footnote:** The whole weekend was a great adventure and "must do" experience for those who enjoy seeing Britain's wild animals, especially those that we have the privilege to see in the sea.

Anthony Hulcoop  
Club Secretary.





Adam Hurt, clever and handsome. Award winning Actor. And writer of this great article. And modest!



Adam Woodman, "the other Adam". Famous for his red dressing gown/towel and always has the same facial expression.



Aimee Hashim, great to be with and a newly qualified BSAC scuba diver! She was very lucky to have seals trailing after her-all the way through the dive.



Anthony Hulcoop, always has a smile (well, some of the times) and has a cool Homer Simpson sat nav. He is also crazy when it comes to underwater photography (never can see him in the water, without a camera!)



Azhar Hashim, funny guy and he also is a newly qualified BSAC scuba diver! He *still* owes Edward and I a Mars bar-(we had a bet that we could beat him in a few races, and we won each time). Message to Azhar: "A Kit Kat bar is NOT a Mars Bar!"



Chloe Davey, (cheer up) fellow Assistant Instructor, is keen to do any dive, no matter how cold. However she doesn't like being the only girl, of her age, to be at Leeson House-so we need more girls to go next year. She wants someone so badly, that she made Tim in to a girl and now he always wears that silly pink top!



Graham Griffiths, Lord Dive Planner guy with the charts. (Useful hint: keep yourself in his good books-he has the magic stamp that allows you to progress up the levels) screwing up his face, as he remembers his last ice lolly: Lemon!



Paul Madelin, award winning smile and a new (ish) member of our snorkelling Club. He and Sue were behind the planning for the trip to Lundy Island, so a special thanks is in order. Cheers guys, for the coldest dive ever!



Sue Brown, another great smile. Again thank you for the trip, as it wouldn't have occurred without you.



Tim Griffiths, where to start with you? Always keeps Dan, Edward and I in check (or tries to). Only male member of the girly pink team (founded by Chloe). And has broken the club boat more times than everyone else put together!!

# Photos taken on the first dive at Lundy Island by Adam Hurt, with the club camera.



Our Boat-Jessica Hetty, with Anthony about to exit into the water.



There were loads of jelly fish, everywhere!!



Huge fat seal very close to us, really quick (dispite thier size)



A seal heading towards me!



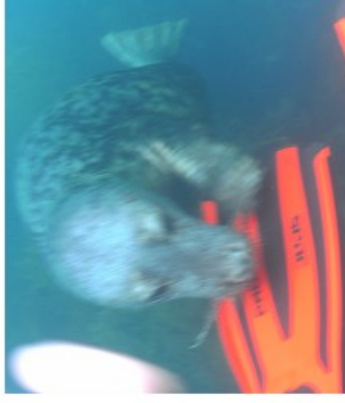
What a beautiful surface dive!



Two of them! Only three metres away! ~scary~



They were soo playful. It was great!!



A paw on "the other Adam's fin! (with his hand also in the photo)



The seal was hugging Tim's fin, and getting a free ride while Tim snorkelled!!