

SSAC Visit to Hope Cove, May 2011

In May this year Southsea SAC returned to Shippen House, a 10 bed holiday home with excellent facilities overlooking the beach at Hope Cove in South Devon. The club books this idyllic place for a week each year to dive wrecks and scenic sites between Plymouth and Salcome. It is also a wonderful place to wind down, relax and enjoy a holiday by the sea.



Hope Cove is about four hours by road from Portsmouth.

By 1400 on Friday afternoon we have the Club RHIB moored for the week at Inner Hope giving us easy access to South Devon wrecksites, such as the Maine and the Persier. The rest of the party arrive during the afternoon and evening.



Saturday 21 May is a cloudy, calm day. We dive the SS Maine, which is about 2 nautical miles from Hope Cove and a convenient work up dive for the boat and the divers. This merchantman was sunk by torpedo in 1917 while on passage from London to Philadelphia. She is an intact wreck sitting upright in 32m. The visibility is good with no sign of the plankton bloom that was in evidence during our previous visit in 2010. Martin sets up his portable compressor in the back garden. This provides air for diving all week and avoids the inconvenience of daily trips to Plymouth to charge cylinders.

Sunday is windy and although sunny the conditions are too rough for boat diving. Some elect to travel by car to Plymouth for shore diving at Eastern Kings. Others enjoy a rest day flying kites, juggling and playing with a Frisbee.



Monday is also rough, but some of us decide to dive the SS Persier about 5nm away in Bigbury Bay. This is the wreck of a Belgian merchantman sunk by torpedo in 1945 while on passage from Cardiff to Antwerp. The swell is around 3m and the trip out and back is like riding a switchback and very exciting. Despite these surface conditions the visibility on the wreck at 30m is excellent. On Tuesday everyone dives the SS Persier in bright, calm conditions.



On Wednesday the weather remains good and we return to the SS Maine. Everyone dives and the visibility is excellent.



Thursday is another windy day and hauling the boat out in the surf is a challenging experience. Thursday is our last evening and we eat everything in the house. This produces some interesting culinary concoctions. After cleaning the house on Friday morning we return to Portsmouth with memories of diving, comradeship and good food to sustain us while we look forward to next year.

