Early doors UK season.

I bullied Dive Master Trainee Paul into diving on March the 25th.

 Weather was not great but very calm sea, mist with ½ mile surface viz. We almost saw the Sun at times. Water temp 8C. Picked up the RIB at Selsey East Beach so access good but steep!

Divers: Paul & Andy

Dive 1

Site: Originally Brigitta/T Pot but switched to Mixon Hole

Vessel: Mulberry RHIB

Depth: 23m

Conditions: See above. Minimal water movement (Ebb slack?)

Visibility: 2m

Special kit: 7L stage, DSMB (briefed to deploy from 8m)

Details: Paul first UK sea dive…… Dropped in seaward of Mixon Cardinal Mark over 5m ledge, descended, quick once over and then swam on compass S-SSE an took us straight to the drop off. Quick shufty for Lump Suckers but no joy. Over the edge, which is undercut 0.5-1m of course. Viz not great and dark very quickly, plenty of crabs huddled away on the underside of the face. We slowly dropped down and out a bit to avoid catching the wall, clearly too cold for the fish to be active. At the bottom Paul found the remains of a lobster pot. Prepped DSMB and turned the dive after twenty minutes as not great viz. Mooched back up the cliff and deployed the blob from 8m as briefed. Did out stop on the edge of the drop, bit of a paddle along the ledge again no Lump Suckers spotted. Up after 40mins, feeling a tad cold.

Paul previous dives in Wraysbury/Vobster were good prep. Not a bad one to cut your teeth on.

Dive 2

Site: Selsey drift

Depth: 10m

Visibility: slightly better 2.5m

Speshul gear: Little extra weight for more air in the dry suit

Details: Paul first drift, quite fun but not a lot seen. Surface visibility was poor so we used a very big SMB. There wasn’t much wind but the SMB did seem to want to pull a bit, maybe the big SMB was not the best option.

Didn’t do a long dive as I had kept the same cylinder and felt a bit cold.

Dive 3

Site: Far/Outer Mulberry

Depth: 10m

Visibility: 2.5m but seemed patchy, on a structure I suppose. Generally the further East you are the better the visibility is supposed to be in these parts.

Details: Down the chain passed the mussels and krill. At the base the small chain with white floats was immediately visible. I have often found it to be buried after rough weather, maybe some thoughtful diver had already cleared it this year. Followed chain to Mulberry, there used to be a big wire arch where the chain ended and you met the edge of the debris but this has now fallen – must have heard about the azure window collapse and gone in sympathy.

Pootled off left around the more intact end, no sign Bib or Pollack. No Lump Suckers or Tompots noted. Bit early for the cuttlefish. Looped around the structure, we were the first ones down but there seemed to be very low viz in/over the main Mulberry section. Did a slow 1.5 circuits of the site, crustaceans and soft corals etc, not much in the way of nosey Wrasse either. Dive 3 and a bit cold so back to the chain. Without the arch this is a bit harder to find in low viz. I thinking of what else to install as a marker. Safety stop and glove load of krill. ☹

All in all worth getting wet but is was chuffin’cold.

Amendment to above late April 2018

 I dived the Far Mulberry again three weeks later on Low water slack.

Water temp now 11-12C with max depth 9.5m. Visibility was much better, even on the “poorer” slack tide.

 Wire “arch” is still in place but now canted over a bit more. Seems I couldn’t find it in the low viz previously. A bit of current on descent but eased off during the dive.

 Lots of big Ballan Wrasse, Corkwing Wrasse and female Cuckoo Wrasse (didn’t spot any males). Blennies etc but no Cuttlefish yet and very few Crabs, apparently theirs a national shortage.

 Also shot chain was free of Krill, plenty of Mussels though.

Date: 28th May 2018

Site: Kyarra

Vessel: Mary Jo, Swanage Dive Charters

Skipper: Brian, professional & smoothly run

Depth: 29m plus change

Conditions: 09:50 ropes off. Sunny & hot.

Visibility: 6m, better at depth

Water temp:12-13C

Divers: Leo & Andy. All O/C.

Special kit: Torches useful & DSMB required.

Details: A calm sea with a little bit of surface current. Boat only had a hand full of divers so lots of space despite being a little smaller than Viper. Travel time to Kyarra was 20 minutes.

Dropped in on the shot. Once away from the surface the current quickly eased off so I could fin down alongside the line doing drills. Wreck was visible from about 18m so descended directly to her and arrived just above the loose boiler.

We circled around below this to 29m. Just below is I found some beer bottles, both intact with partial label & broken. Leo & I headed forward and gradually shallower in the direction of the bow where we turned around.

Following the line of the Wreck we passed through and over the remains of the forward holds. Leo spotted some intact looking champagne bottles but we left them alone. They were through a small hatch but quite accessible.

After this we headed onto the top the remaining structure and prepared to ascend. There was now a bit of current over the top and a slight drop in visibility. But nothing problematic.

We deployed a DSMB and slowly made out way up with a deep stop at 15m. We could still make out the wreck outline and weren’t drifting much. Safety stop at 6m and signalled to the boat for pick up at the surface. A couple of other boat had dropped divers after we went in.

This wreck lies on her starboard side with much of the structure collapsed. Still very identifiable as a ship though. Quite a lot of protruding metal work and partially open compartments. I can well imagine it’s quite confusing in poor visibility.

Quite an enjoyable dive but not ideal for newly qualified divers even if they have the depth progression. The majority of the wreck sits below 25m so “multi-level” diving to gain more extra No-Deco time requires attention and is of limited value. On most tides you will have to bag-off for ascent and potentially drift a long way.

Minimum experience: 30m certification with some experience of UK diving conditions plus confident to deploy DSMB and/or Deep/Wreck specialty.

Big enough site to be worth mixed gas accelerated deco procedures.