



Deep Diver

In this instalment of the PADI Specialty of the Month series, PADI Advanced Open Water Diver **Matt Griffiths** (Sport Diver art director) tries his hand at deep diving in the chilly waters of Stoney Cove

Photographs by **Frogfish Photography**

Being a PADI AOW Diver (see page 64 onwards), I had already had a small taste of deep diving, although admittedly it was only to a depth of 20m - not exactly a really 'deep' dive. I was looking forward to getting the Deep Diver Specialty under my belt so that when Team Sport Diver visit a stunning tropical location, I can dive to depths of up to 40m and make the most of the adventure.

The extra 10m that a Deep Diver is allowed to go exposes you to more hazards than the previous 30m recreational limit due to additional nitrogen levels building up in your body, a stronger likelihood of feeling narcosis, and faster consumption of air. I was slightly apprehensive about diving deeper than I had ever done before, however it was reassuring that I was diving with instructors I know well and trust.

Arriving early at Stoney Cove, we were greeted by glorious sunshine and, after a quick coffee, we ran through the briefing for dive one. It was immediately

apparent a huge part of this course is about additional safety measures, equipment consideration and having a bulletproof plan of action. Once geared up, with Andy on surface support, Caroline, Nick and myself began descending down to our planned depth of 25-30m. The water was murky and the visibility wasn't as good as I had expected, but nevertheless I felt comfortable in the conditions and we soon found the bottom at 29m.

I had brought down an empty bottle and tennis ball with me to see the difference the water pressure made at depth, and I was surprised how much the bottle had been crushed! After a slow ascent and standard safety stop of three minutes, we emerged at the surface and logged the dive.

On dive two, we planned to go to the bottom of Stoney, roughly 36m. I knew on this dive I would be feeling some narcosis, so pre-dive I made sure all my equipment was streamlined and easy to access if required. After a thorough buddy check with Andy, we

started our descent with cameraman Nick and editor Mark Evans in tow. One skill for this dive required me to write my name backwards on a slate to see how being 'narked' affected me. On the surface I could spell 'Matthew' backwards without any difficulty, but at 36m I was struggling to think what letter came first? 'T', maybe 'E', no Matt! After a brief pause and with maximum concentration, I did manage to spell it correctly, though the hand writing was reminiscent of a four-year-old's.

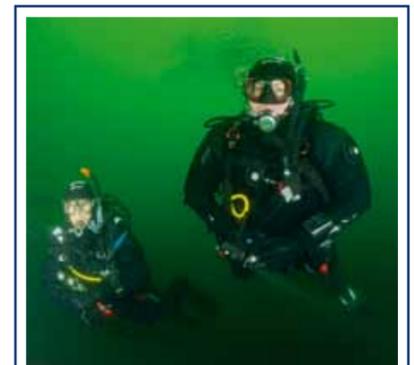
The conditions at the bottom were tough - silt had been kicked up by previous divers and visibility was down to around two metres or perhaps even less. I consistently stayed shoulder to shoulder with Andy to ensure we didn't become separated. Once I had completed the desired skills and posed for a few photographs, we began our ascent. This dive required us to do an eight-minute safety stop at 5m using either a hang tank or a buddy's octopus. After what seemed like an age on Andy's octopus, we finally broke the

surface, exited the water and logged the dive.

Dive three, and with Mark as our guide, we headed to the Stanegarth wreck for my final dive of this Specialty. As we began to explore the outside of the wreck it filled me with excitement about next month's Wreck Diver Specialty. I remember thinking to myself I cannot wait to start exploring different wrecks and see what history there is to discover. During the dive I once again demonstrated to Nick and Andy that I could keep good buddy contact and be aware of my surroundings at depth.

Two days at Stoney Cove and three dives later, I had notched up yet another Specialty - and for me the most-rewarding one yet. The conditions were challenging, but I felt I had overcome a big hurdle in my diving adventures. ■

NB: Matt's continued PADI education has been supported by Frogfish Photography, PADI EMEA, Mares, DiveLife, Suunto and Fourth Element.



PREREQUISITES

- Minimum age: 15
- Adventure Diver or equivalent qualifying rating

Next month: **PADI WRECK DIVER**