

Farnes Diving

10th – 17th August 2002

Farne Island diving is based at Seahouses, the closest harbour. It is a pleasant, if unremarkable seaside town blessed, perhaps, with more than its strict quota of caravans, amusement arcades and fish and chip shops. Diving facilities are limited to one air-fill station. The boats and skippers are usually lobster fishers by trade, so groups need to be self-sufficient with kit and spares. Between dives, there are castles to see (Bamburgh and Lindisfarne are both magnificent) and miles of those big, broad, sandy kind of beaches that make grown men want to build sandcastles.

The Farne wrecks are impressive, but it is the seals that stay in the mind long after you have made the trek back home. Some of the finest dives are to be had around the rocky gullies of Longstone, another of the furthest Farnes, which act as nurseries for the younger seals. With the boat close in to the rocks, it is a simple matter to drop off, descend and head up into the gullies, as seals plunge, twisting, through the water around you. This is British diving at its finest. But maybe leave your best pair of fins at home.



The Farne Islands

The **Farne Islands** lie in the very north-east of England, just off the Northumberland coast midway between the fishing village of Seahouses and the ancient Northumbrian capital of **Bamburgh**. They are located at the most easterly point of the 'Great Whin Sill' which begins in Cumberland some 80 miles distant and gives a distinct and spectacular character to the North Northumbrian coastline. Comprising between 15 and 28 islands the number to be seen depend very much upon the state of the tide and consisting solely of bare igneous rock.

The Farnes are divided into three main groups:

Outer Farnes (northernmost group) made up from 'Staple', 'Brownsman', 'Big Harcar' and 'Little Harcar'; 'North' and 'South Wamses' and 'Longstone' Islands.

Inner Farnes (southernmost group) made up from East and West 'Wide Opens', 'Scarcar' and the 'Inner Farne'.

Lindisfarne Though lying very much closer inshore and to the north-west of the Inner and Outer Farnes, *The Holy Island of Lindisfarne* justifies its claim to be included mainly through its geological associations. It is also the only inhabited Island within the group.



Geology



Originally the Farne Islands were connected to the mainland and the reason for separation is probably a post-glacial rise in sea level and marine erosion, cutting along lines of weakness. Dolerite is the dominant rock of the Islands and in places the intrusive sheet reaches around 30M in thickness. It is columnar and well fissured. The columnar nature of the

dolerite can be seen in three pinnacles weathered away from the south-east of Staple Island and reaching 20M feet in height (the fourth was destroyed in a storm over 200 years ago).

Close to the Inner Farne the stack has similar characteristics and fissures have been enlarged into deep chasms thus forming the 'Chasm' and St.Cuthbert's Gut' - both on the Inner Farne. During a storm the sea rushes up the churn and can thrust a column of water to over 100 feet!

The general trend of the rock is from south-west to north-east and this means that the islands have cliffs or rocky faces on the south and east and slope gradually to the north and west. The cliffs reach a height of around 24M near the Inner Farne lighthouse. There are three sandy beaches, the most extensive being that in St.Cuthbert's Cove. Striae on the whin clearly show the effect of glacial action but the most important result of glaciation was the deposition of boulder clay on the Brownsman, Staple Island, Inner Fame and West Wide Opens. On top of this clay subsoil is a layer of light peat and it is here that virtually all the vegetation is found.



Natural History

Today soil erosion is a serious problem on the islands, but is being dealt with by the work of the National Trust. The Inner Fame at 16 acres has less than 5 acres of soils. However, despite the small areas of soil there is a wide variety of vegetation - numerous flowering plants in addition to mosses and lichens. Some 116 plants have been recorded on the Farnes. The majority are on the Inner Fame and include daisy, primrose, ragwort, thrift, scurvy grass, silverweed, bugloss, sorrel, nettle, dock and purple sea rocket. *Amsinckia intermedia* is the most unusual plant on the Farnes - a native of California. This orange-yellow flowered plant is said to have been introduced in poultry feed by lighthouse keepers many years ago. Sea Campion is the most common plant and in summer its white flowers cover much of Inner Fame, Staple Island and the Brownsman. There are no trees on the islands and only a few elder bushes on Inner Fame planted by the previous lighthouse keepers to shelter their vegetable plots.

Shipwrecks

Together, the Farne Islands represent one of the most dangerous hazards to shipping around the entire British Isles and have claimed numerous victims over the centuries. There are many island and land-based beacons to warn seafarers on the busy shipping lanes navigating into the port of Berwick-upon-Tweed or on a northern passage to nearby Edinburgh. Indeed the lighthouse that stands upon the Longstone is reckoned to have the most powerful light in Europe.

Accommodation Fahren House

This excellent house has spectacular panoramic views directly overlooking the inner Farne Island, and is furnished and equipped to high standards. Situated on the outskirts of the village (Bamburgh side), Fahren House ("Fahren" is celtic for "A place of retreat"), lives up to its name. Beautiful clean sandy beaches are just over the road, extending North to Bamburgh, and the colourful harbour of Seahouses is just a few minutes walk.

The owner's family run a famous fleet of boats (Glad Tidings) to the Farne Islands - Bird, Seal Watching, Fishing or diving trips can also be arranged throughout the year. The house is a perfect base for a seaside holiday exploring the magnificent Heritage Coast or the unspoilt countryside of inland Northumberland.

Sleeps 8 in 4 Bedrooms

Ground floor: Attractive & cosy sitting room with wood burning stove, colour TV/video, CD Hi-Fi. Sea views. Sun room with doors to garden. Second sitting/dining room with sea views, books & games etc. New kitchen with oil Aga cooker, electric cooker, dishwasher, microwave.

Utility room with automatic washing machine, tumble dryer, sink unit. Downstairs Shower, WC, wash hand basin.

First floor: Bedroom 1 - 1 double bed, wash hand basin - sea views. Bedroom 2 - 1 double bed, wash hand basin - sea views. Bedroom 3 - 2 single beds, wash hand basin. Bedroom 4 - Full size bunk beds - sea views. Main bathroom with bath, shower cubicle, wash hand basin, WC.

Private driveway + garage (storage for bikes, small boats). Large enclosed garden with furniture and barbecue. Oil fired central heating. All Power, Fuel & Bed Linen included in rent.



Costs	Accommodation (8 people)	£895
	Towing (370miles x 2 @ £0.40/mile)	£300
	Boat fuel @ £50 x 6 days	£300
	Boat Launch (£6 + £1.50 per person) x 6 days	£108
	Club Boat Fees (£8 per person x 8) x 6 days	£384
	Total Cost	£2000
	Total Cost per Person based on 8	£250

People Going

Pete Smith
Lou Smith
Steve Baker
Karen Gagarni
Mark Mumford (Tower)
Shaun McConnell
Claire Humphries
Andy Sarsons ?
Andy Humphry ?