



DIVER PROFILE

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University of Limerick SAC's branch diving officer, Pepijn van de Ven moved from the Netherlands to Ireland in 2002 looking for some great diving and has been there ever since. Now happily married to an Irish girl and working at the university as a researcher he is holding out for a dolphin encounter ...



■ WHERE DID YOU LEARN TO DIVE?

● In the Netherlands. My first open water dive was in a lake (Oostvoornse plas) with a wreck of a car, a boat and a trail of tyres in between. The tyre trail was very handy with 1 metre viz and no compass skills. (Some things never change!).

■ WHAT TYPE OF DIVER ARE YOU?

● Very much middle of the road; I enjoy relaxed wreck or scenic dives within normal depth limits. I don't fancy hanging off a line for long deco's on a regular basis.

■ WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PIECE OF KIT?

● That has to be my torch! I invested in a Metalsub torch years ago and it has never let me down. Although a Spanish customs officer once wanted to confiscate the battery pack as he thought it looked a bit like a bomb! (Thankfully the Irish customs never give me any trouble!).

■ DIVE-BUDDY - WHO DO YOU ENJOY DIVING WITH MOST?

● I guess I'm a bit of a dive tramp - I don't really mind who I am diving with!

■ FAVOURITE DIVE-SITE?

● That would probably have to be the *Thistlegorm*. Although deteriorating, this wreck has so much to offer, both in terms of fish life as well as military equipment. And then those bikes!

■ BEST COUNTRY VISITED?

● Probably Norway although the Maldives were fantastic as well. In the autumn of 2007 Paul Wood (Bo'ness) organised a trip to the Narvik wrecks. On board the *Jane R* we dived the Ofofjord and all the (mainly German) wrecks it has to offer. Due to the shelter offered by the fjord and Norwegian law, those wrecks are still in very good condition. Together with the stunning Norwegian scenery this really does make for spectacular diving.

■ WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GO DIVING?

● I still enjoy doing training dives. Although the number of instructors in our branch has significantly increased over the last number of years, as a university branch our training load is always quite high. Getting people in the water and qualified is certainly a motivation. In general I get motivated by the prospect of a nice scenic dive and of course the pre and post dive craic.

■ DREAM DIVE BUDDY?

● If I were to use a free interpretation of 'dive buddy', I would say one of the resident dolphins around Ireland. They are in various places along the west coast (Dingle's Fungi probably the most famous) and members of our branch have encountered them (Sinead, my wife, on her first dive!). Around Fanore in county Clare the local dolphin even interrupted a static air share by sticking its beak in between the two divers. Unfortunately I still haven't had an under water encounter with these fantastic creatures.

■ DREAM DIVE DESTINATION?

● I will say New Zealand as that's where Sinead and I are heading in October!

■ BEST DIVE BOOK EVER READ?

● *Stars Beneath the Sea*. This is a very interesting book in which Trevor Norton tells the stories of the Haldanes, Hans Hass, Frédéric Dumas (one of Cousteau's buddies) and other pioneers of diving. Recently I read *Diver* by Tony Groom, who was a clearance diver in the British Navy and active in the Falkland war. Tony is clearly not a writer, but despite this he has managed to put an interesting and often hilarious book together. Definitely a good second place!

■ WHAT BUGS YOU MOST ABOUT DIVING?

● Always being in the group that didn't see the dolphin, shark, manta or whatever! Then again, that is nicely offset by an encounter with an electric ray in Ballinskelligs, Ireland. If you don't believe me, just ask Murray MacCallum!

■ HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE DIVING TO NON-DIVERS?

● You just have to try it!!

