

On Saturday afternoon, July 5, 2008, nineteen divers gathered for a weekend of diving in eastern Lake Erie on Osprey Charter's boat "Southwind." Aboard were members of the Lake Erie Wreck Divers (LEWD), the Bay Area Divers (BAD), and other individuals. The divers included Ed Noga, Jim Jones, Dave Miller, Jacques Girouard, George Balas, Marty Leonard, Tom Wilson, Vlada Dekina, KB Sporck, Pete Deegan, Jason Myatt, Marga Devam, Jon Tepas, Georgann and Mike Wachter, Ann Stephenson, Cindy LaRosa, and Kevin Magee. Also joining the group was Wayne Rush, who provided excellent mooring services to the wrecks. Jim Herbert captained the boat with the help of Mike, now a full licensed captain himself, as deckhand.

The weather appeared to be building with 2' seas, whitecaps, and a stiff northeast wind when the divers first arrived at the dock, but it was decided to try anyway to make the long 30-mile run to the "Trade Wind" and "Crystal Wreck." Both wrecks are located across the lake off Long Point on the Canadian side. As the boat left the dock, the wind calmed, and the seas reduced to 1' with no whitecaps, making for a comfortable ride to the first wreck, the "Trade Wind." This wreck is a three-masted barkentine that sank in 120' of water in a collision with another sailing vessel, the "Charles Napier," during a snow squall in December, 1854. Its cargo was stoves, railroad rails, and two U.S. Government lifeboats, which came in handy and allowed the crew to escape the sinking vessel with no losses. The "Trade Wind" was barely a year old when it sank, leaving the ship in excellent condition on the bottom. There was no mooring, requiring Wayne to set the hook before everyone else geared up.

Ambient lighting was dim on the bottom, but visibility was an acceptable 30'. As one's eyes adjusted, the ambient lighting was bright enough to see without a light, and the visibility seemed to improve slightly. Surface visibility was about 10', and the surface temperature was 70 deg F. A spread out thermocline was encountered between 60'-70', and 42-43 deg F water was found on the bottom. The mooring was tied about 30' off the port side amidships on a fallen mast lying parallel to the wreck. On the port side of the ship all along its length lie the extensive remains of the foremast and mizzenmast. Stepped topmasts, crosstrees, bracing platform, spars, booms, gaffs, and other parts all form an impressive collection of rare barkentine mast structure laying on the bottom.

The stern points north, and an intact cabin fills the entire width of the ship at the extreme stern. At the forward end the cabin are two companionways leading inside, one on each side of the ship. The cabin is mostly filled with silt with pieces of interior debris poking out of the silt and 3'-4' of clearance overhead. On top of the cabin roof in the middle is a small skylight opening with raised framing. There is no steering deck behind the cabin, but towards the stern on the cabin's roof is a square opening with a sunken floor and the ship's wheel mounted inside. This is a rather unique design, and looking inside the cabin at this location revealed a broken piece of blue and white china lying on the floor on the starboard side. It was obviously found and placed there for display by a diver.

Behind the stern can be seen the impressive transom, rudder, and underside curves of the ship. The rudder points straight ahead and exists in a scoured hole where more than 120' depths can be reached.

The deck level is at a 110' depth and can be easily viewed while swimming at a 105' depth. The entire ship has a 30-degree list to the port side, making the starboard railing the highest point of the wreck. The ship's wooden railings are mostly intact except a pair of purposeful breaks near the stern to make cargo loading easier. Several deadeyes can be seen mounted on the railings. Moving forward along the length of the vessel, the broken mizzenmast stub is first encountered aft of a cargo hatch opening. Inside the hold can be seen two rectangular stoves from the ship's cargo peeking out of the silt. Forward of the hatch are two side-by-side separate large-diameter pump barrels, an older design. Amidships is the mainmast lying perpendicularly across the deck and fallen towards the port side. A centerboard winch is askew and partially hidden by wooden debris aft of the mast, and an old-style cylindrical-head capstan is forward of the mast. Forward of the capstan are lots of railroad rails on the deck that partially hide a second cargo hold. The rails are scattered like matchsticks all over the deck and fall down the port side and over the railing onto the bottom. Finally, forward of this hatch is the foremast stub, which is itself curiously set inside a small hatch opening.

Adjacent to the foremast on the starboard side very near the bow is a large triangular gash that extends into the side of the ship and deck, destroying the railing. A large spar lies across the deck and down into the bottom at this hole. This is where the "Napier" hit the "Trade Wind," and the spar is the "Napier's" jib boom, which was left behind on the stricken ship after the collision. At the bow is a forecastle deck elevated slightly higher than the main deck. A large windlass is on the forecastle, and a square deck opening to the chain locker is visible immediately behind the windlass. From the windlass pawl bitt extends two beams that run diagonally forward and out the railings at the bow on each side to form two catheads for the anchors. Curiously, however, aft of each cathead is an additional L-shaped cathead attached to the railing. The fact that there are two sets of catheads is another unusual feature of the wreck. On both sides of the bow attached to each L-shaped cathead is a metal-stocked anchor with its flukes resting on the forecastle deck. Anchor chains pass from each anchor through the hawseholes and into the ship's bow in an orderly fashion. The bowsprit is missing, but the bow has an attractive blunt shape when viewed directly from the front. The bow stands about 8' off the bottom.

The next wreck visited was the "Crystal Wreck," an unidentified two-masted schooner in 115' of water a few miles away. It got its name not from dishware at the site but the beer that was drunk immediately after this wreck was first dove. It was found because it was a known net snag to commercial fishermen, and it was originally called the "Hook" for this reason. The wreck has many nets on it as a result, especially at the bow, stern, and starboard side. There was no

mooring present, so Wayne installed one. The conditions on the bottom, however, were quite different than on the "Trade Wind." The visibility was only about 15', and conditions were dark, requiring a good light to see. As one descended to the wreck, divers were first greeted by a floating net snagged on the port railing of the bow. Care had to be taken to avoid the net, which floated as a large curtain about 10' above the wreck. The bow points east, and the bowsprit is intact and draped in netting that decoratively hangs underneath. The mooring was attached to a metal-stocked anchor resting on the bow's deck on the port side. This anchor is partially hidden by the netting snagged on the port railing, and no starboard anchor is evident. A windlass is on the bow with a pawl bitt and intact rocker mechanisms mounted to the front of the bitt to actuate the windlass. The bowsprit attaches to the front of the bitt as well. Aft of the windlass is a square chain locker opening in the deck.

The deck is at 105' and has only a few missing sections of boards. The railing is intact around the ship's perimeter except for a section near the bow on the port side. The hull shows no obvious signs of damage and stands 10' high off the bottom. Moving aft of the windlass, a new-style double-barreled hand pump can be seen minus its handles. Aft of the pump is the foremast stub surrounded by a partially collapsed square fife rail. A cargo hatch opening and then an old-style cylindrical-head capstan amidships follow this. Aft of the capstan is a smaller hatch with the centerboard box dividing the hatch down the middle. The deck planks are torn up along the centerline aft of this hatch until the centerboard winch is encountered askew. Finally, there is another cargo hatch opening, an old-style single-barreled pump, and the mainmast stub without any fife rail. The presence of an earlier style pump suggests the pump at the bow was added later, meaning the ship may not have sunk early in its career. Except for the bow's pump, all deck equipment is an earlier style, suggesting the ship was built in the mid-1800's.

Aft of the mainmast stub is a large cavity that completely fills the width of the ship where the cabin was located before the ship sank. The broken remains of the planked floor of the cabin can be seen about 5' below the deck level. At the southeast corner of the cabin is a square stove, and sitting on it are the remains of heavily encrusted cookware found by divers and collected there for viewing. Lying on the main deck in front of the stove are a variety of tools, spikes, and miscellaneous items, including a hammer. At the rear of the cabin is an elevated box-like structure that surrounds the rudder post and holds the ship's wheel. The box is partially draped in netting, and the netting also hangs down 10' to the bottom behind the transom, forming a curtain that partially hides the rudder, which points straight ahead.

Upon surfacing, the seas had calmed to 0', making the lake's surface glassy and mirror flat. It was a very smooth ride back to port with a beautiful sunset behind us. Upon arriving back at port, we unloaded our tanks for Jim to fill before the next day's trip. We then ate dinner at his daughter Lisa's restaurant at the top of

the hill near the marina. She stayed open late for us, and the food and local vineyard wines were excellent.

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On Sunday, July 6, 2008, the seas were still calm at less than 1', and the sky was clear and sunny. The air temperatures were warmer at 80-85 deg F instead of the more pleasant 70-75 deg F from the previous day. Wayne Rush and Jim Jones did not dive this day, but we were joined by Jon Tepas' fiancé Lisa, who is not a diver but nevertheless came along to watch the fun. Since the previous day's run had been so far, Sunday's trip was a short one to the "John J. Boland." This large steel ship foundered in 130' of water in October, 1932, after strong seas caught it with excess coal loaded on its deck and no hatch covers installed. It had attempted to run the short distance from Erie, PA, to the Welland Canal without this precaution. Fifteen crewmen survived and four died in the sudden sinking of the ship, which - per typical fashion with steel ships - rolled as it sank. As a result, the wreck lies almost upside down but partially on its starboard side, exposing the port deck and gunwale. It was decided two dives would be done on the wreck, the first at the stern and the second at the bow. The "Boland" is 250' long, making it a long, difficult swim to see the entire wreck in one dive, especially at that depth. Upon arriving at the wreck, however, a local boat was attached to the stern mooring, forcing us tie to the bow's mooring first.

A spread out thermocline was encountered between 50'-60' with cold 40 deg F water below it. Visibility, however, was wonderful at 50' or more, and the ambient lighting was bright and did not require a light. The bow's mooring is tied to the port side's navy-style anchor still stowed in its hawse recess at the bow, and the stem curves gracefully into the bottom. The bow points southwest, and on the bow's deck is a half-buried windlass followed by the forward deckhouse. The wheelhouse is buried underneath the silt, but the lower officer's quarters are exposed. Peering into an open doorway on the aft side of the deckhouse, a wood-paneled hallway and rooms can be seen with open doors, a steam radiator, and ceramic electrical insulators on the wall. Because of the upside nature of the wreck, it is disorienting to look at the interior spaces, and due to the thick silt buildup, penetration of the wreck is not recommended. Behind the deckhouse is a cargo hold opening. It is easily swum into, and the cavernous cargo hold can be examined above and down the length of the ship. A burbot, a.k.a. lawyer fish or lingcod, was seen hiding in a frame near the top of the hold. On the deck aft of the first cargo opening is a winch for cargo and equipment handling. At least four more cargo openings can be found while swimming down the length of the wreck. They can be examined by following the port gunwale, which is at a 100' depth. The top of the wreck is at 90', which is the underside of the ship on the port side. The bottom of the ship is fairly flat, and the slightly raised keel can be seen running the length of the ship.

At the stern the final cargo opening is raised with a crew ladder required to reach it above the cargo deck. Near this cargo opening is another winch mounted to the deck. The stern deckhouse is then encountered with another crew ladder going to its roof. On the roof is a square box that is partially buried in the bottom. There are also two hanging lifeboat davits and two cradles used to support the now-missing lifeboat. Very close to the bottom can be seen the raised skylights to the engine room partially buried in the bottom. The side of the deckhouse has an open door near the front, and then a covered breezeway aft. Inside this breezeway are another open door and two portholes. Looking into each open door, the steel interiors of the rooms can be seen with each room half-filled with silt. The stern deck has yet another winch half-buried in the bottom.

The stern mooring is tied to the underside of the ship on the skeg of the large single rudder, which is mounted behind a large four-bladed propeller. The rudder appears to be of an older and slightly archaic design when compared to modern rudders. It was a wonderful, relaxing two dives on the "Boland," and we then returned ashore for the long drive home. We were fortunate to have such great weather and underwater conditions, and we hope to do it again soon!