

On Saturday, May 2, 2009, Cindy LaRosa and Kevin Magee did their first lake dives of the season. This unusually early start was thanks to Osprey Charter's announcement of three new Lake Erie shipwrecks to be dove at the start of the season. A total of 19 divers converged on Barcelona, NY, for the afternoon trip to be the first to check them out. The divers included Wayne Rush, Jimmy Herbert, James Moseley, John and Donna Gavroy, Jack Papes, Ed Noga, Mike Chrisopulos, Jay Roy, Jenn Bush, Oren Levstan, Dave Shepard, Kelly Rodgers, Mike Vert, Chad Cavallaro, Dan Stocker, and Chris Laughrey. Jim Herbert captained Osprey's boat "Southwind" with the help of Mike as crew.

The weather cooperated beautifully with a bright sunny sky, light 1'-2' seas, and cool but comfortable 55-60 deg F air temperatures. After a long trip, the divers arrived at the first wreck, dubbed "Target #1," off Dunkirk, NY, in 80 feet of water. All three wrecks are located in close proximity to each other and are suspected to have been purposely scuttled. Wayne and Jimmy dove first to hook the wreck, and then the other divers followed. The water was expected to be a cold 36-38 deg F, but it turned out to be warmer than expected at 38-40 deg F. There was no thermocline, however, and the lake was this temperature from top to bottom. Outstanding visibility was expected since 100'+ surface visibility had been encountered on the "Boland" the previous weekend. Alas, this was not the case, and only about 5' of average visibility was encountered. In some areas a dim 10' of visibility was found where the bottom hadn't been disturbed. Conditions were also dark and required a good light. However, this was still good enough to see and explore the new wreck.

"Target #1" is a small wooden sailing vessel less than 40'-50' long with its bow pointing northeast. It consists of only the hull with no decking, and all equipment and rigging have been removed. No windlass, capstan, winches, pumps, or any other equipment were found. No deadeyes or chain plates were found to suggest the rigging type or number of masts this vessel may have had. Based on the small size of the wreck and its lack of a centerboard box, it may have only had one mast. The wreck lies low in the silt and only reaches about 3'-5' high at the bow. The bow is rounded in shape with a simple stem. No railing exists around the badly broken perimeter of the wreck, and only the hull's frames and a little of the planking stick above the bottom. There are two complete breakdowns of the hull; the first is on the port side at the bow, and the second is at the stern on the starboard side. In both cases the bottom intrudes into the wreck's interior in a great roll of sculpted clay that appears at first very much like a fallen mast but is in fact just bottom material. The shipwreck rests in the middle of a 2'-3' deep bowl in the mud bottom and is completely surrounded by a wall of clay that is sculpted in odd patterns. The rolls of clay that enter the ship run in an east-west direction, and thus appear to enter the wreck diagonally.

There is one large deck beam, to which the mooring was tied, that crosses the wreck's width amidships. The simple square stern has only the sternpost. No rudderpost was seen, suggesting even the rudder was removed from the ship. The only interesting items found were two carafe-shaped bottles. One was found inside the wreck partially buried on the starboard side just forward of the transecting beam. It is made of clear glass and says "STORE 5¢ BOTTLE" on one side and "ONE QUART liquid" on the other side. A similar bottle was also found in the same area outside the wreck. It is unknown whether these bottles are contemporary to the wreck, or if they simply rolled along the bottom from other areas and were trapped by the wreck.

After everyone was back aboard, the boat was moved a short distance to the next wreck, called "Target #2." This wreck was visited and dove in August, 2007, but many divers had not seen this particular wreck, so it was chosen to dive again. Wayne and Jimmy moored the wreck, and then the other divers followed. This wreck lies in 75' of water, and very similar conditions were encountered on the bottom. This wreck, however, is larger and more intact than the previous wreck. It was measured at 55' in length with a 19' beam at the stern. It stands 5'-8' high off the bottom, and the hull is not broken down at any locations. A complete railing surrounds the wreck, and the railing has cutouts on both side at the bow and stern for the loading and off-loading of cargo by ramp and wheelbarrow, suggesting this was a working cargo ship. The bow points west, has a very blunt rounded shape, and features a prominent cutout for a missing bowsprit.

However, just as with the previous ship, almost everything else is missing. There is no decking, and most equipment – windlass, capstan, pumps, and winches – has been removed. In the center of the wreck is a centerboard box, and aft are three deck beams that cross the ship. However, there are two pieces of remaining equipment. A small wood-stocked anchor hangs upside down off the starboard bow's railing by one fluke. The shank rests vertically against the hull, and the wood stock is near the bottom flush with the hull. A chain comes off the anchor and disappears into the silt under the wreck. It is unknown why this item was left or if it is even contemporary to the wreck. There is also a possibly hollow wooden pipe that sticks up diagonally aft of the last deck beam that may be related to a pump, although a heavy covering of mussels made this hard to examine. The stern is a simple squared design with a sternpost and a slightly tilted rudderpost. Behind the ship is some partially buried debris that looks somewhat like the broken off rudder, although it would have to be uncovered to be sure. Like the last wreck, the wreck sits in a sculpted mud bowl 2'-3' deep in the bottom. There are no deadeyes or chain plates on the railings to suggest the number of masts, but it was probably a two-masted schooner based on its size and the presence of the centerboard

box. There is also fishing net and ropes hung on this wreck, including off the bow, and plastic blue floats can be found in some locations.

Finally, an attempt was made to dive the third wreck, but this small low-lying wreck could not be located with the bottom sounder. Wayne and James attempted to manually locate the wreck by searching around a shot line thrown on the coordinates, but nothing was found, so the search was abandoned, and this wreck was saved for another day.