

CLUE, 2009-06-13 – “Crib Wreckage”

While searching in the vicinity of Cleveland’s “Five-Mile Crib,” known officially as “Crib #3,” on June 6, 2009, David VanZandt, Lorry Wagner, and Kevin Magee from the Cleveland Underwater Explorers (CLUE) found some large unidentified wreckage on the bottom in 50 feet of water. At the time the unusual target was simply noted and searching continued. Later the following week on June 13, Dave and Kevin returned to dive the structure and determine what it was. The spring weather was sunny, clear, and cool at 60-65 deg F with seas running 2-3 feet high, whitecaps, and a northeast wind blowing. Nevertheless, it was decided to dive the target since it was close to Cleveland with an easy retreat back to harbor.

The surface water had 5-6 feet of visibility and a 65 degree F water temperature. Upon descending the divers found the anchor was in the sandy mud bottom off the wreckage with dark conditions, 3-4 feet of visibility, and a 60 degree F bottom temperature. A reel line was run from the anchor, and a heading was taken in the general direction of the wreckage. Within 20-30 feet an individual wood beam measuring roughly 6 to 12 inches on a side was encountered, and upon running its length another parallel beam was encountered 5-10 feet away off to one side. This second board was near a large, roughly square wooden structure off its furthest side. This raft-like structure was made from large cut timbers but obviously was not from a ship due to the protruding square bolts and large gaps between the timbers. Nevertheless, it stands 1-2 feet off the bottom and measures approximately 10-20 feet on each side. The low visibility made inspection difficult, but the perimeter of the entire structure was circled and its interior explored. At the furthest end, a 2-3 feet wide wooden beam larger than the surrounding timbers was found to project from the raft’s side. It stands a foot higher than the surrounding timbers, and its purpose could not be discerned.

After a half hour of exploration in the low visibility around the structure, the reel was wound up, and the dive was ended. However, upon later inspection of the sidescan images, it was realized only one end of the entire structure was actually explored. The first two beams encountered appear to be joists on a mostly buried wooden deck flush with the bottom, and the raft is one terminating end of this bridge-like span. The other unexplored end has a much larger, taller structure present. The identity of this object is still unknown, but it is suspected to be debris from the construction of the crib and not from a ship. The “Five-Mile Crib” is one of two main water intakes for the City of Cleveland and was built from 1898-1904. Unlike Cleveland’s other submerged water intake, Crib #5, it is marked with a large above-water structure visible from shore. Further research and investigation of the wreckage under better conditions will be necessary to identify it.