

On Tuesday, August 25, 2009, Mike Holda and Kevin Magee met after work for some dives in Lake Erie. Mike towed his 18' boat "Erie Lady" to the brand new Sheffield Lake, OH, boat ramp and prepared the boat for launch. They loaded their dive gear, launched the boat, and headed out into a slightly choppy lake. The first dive site was "Greenie Reef," a natural reef known to local fishermen. It rises from 30'-35' deep water to 20' and is known as "Greenie" because of the weeds that are occasionally snagged while fishing. Mike, an avid fisherman, had always wondered exactly what the reef itself looks like. They found several fishermen on the reef, and after getting their permission, anchored to the top of it.

Upon descending, visibility was found to be good at 8'-10' with bright ambient lighting, 76-78 deg F water temperature, and a slight east current. The reef itself was discovered to be a natural bedrock outcrop that is mostly flat on top with occasional boulders and small sand patches. There was a slight algae covering on the reef, but no plant life was observed that would explain the weeds snagged by fishermen. Very few distinct landmarks were present, requiring reels to explore the reef. About 300'-400' of reel line was run out in a straight line without falling off the top of the reef, and a 22' depth was recorded for most of the dive. Several large sheephead were observed along with ever-present gobies, but no other fish life was observed. Much to Mike's disappointment, there was also very little snagged fishing gear to recover. Overall, it was a pleasant dive with mild conditions on a unique dive site.

After surfacing from the first dive, the sun was beginning to set, so it was decided to do a night dive on the wreck of the "Craftsman." This barge lies in 40' of water on a rock bottom and features a MAST mooring, which makes it easy to hook and dive. The "Craftsman" is a 90' x 28' metal work barge that sank in June, 1958, while being towed between Huron, OH, and Cleveland. It also features a crane a hundred feet off the barge. Upon entering the water it was immediately obvious the conditions had radically changed since the first dive. There was a very strong east current, and the visibility was much reduced, especially at the bottom. Visibility on the concrete mooring block at the northeast corner of the barge was only about 2'. On the deck of the barge, which is about 8' off the bottom, visibility was only about 5'. The swim west down the length of the barge was quick and easy due to the strong current, but the return trip required a greater effort. Due to the poor conditions, Mike and Kevin stayed on the deck of the barge with no attempt made to navigate to the crane.

The wreck was circled several times while Mike chased sleeping fish on the deck. Unbelievably, Mike actually managed to catch a small perch with his bare hands! Seen were two large walleye, many perch, and some bass. While circling the wreck, it was noticed waves of cold, low visibility bottom water were washing over the eastern deck of the barge much like waves washing over the deck of a floating ship. Also noticed was a constant dull roar, probably from the current racing past the wreck. After getting tired of chasing fish, Mike and Kevin surfaced. The current was strong enough they had to hold onto the mooring

while doing their safety stop. Afterwards, they boarded the boat, headed back to shore, pulled the boat out of the water, and headed home tired but happy.